United Nations A/72/114–E/2017/75

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
22 June 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Item 19 of the preliminary list*
Follow-up to and implementation of the outcomes of the International Conferences on Financing for Development

Economic and Social Council
2017 session
28 July 2016-27 July 2017
Agenda item 11 (a)
Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development

Summary by the President of the Economic and Social Council of the forum on financing for development follow-up, including the special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (New York, 22-25 May 2017)[1]

I. Introduction

1. The second forum on financing for development follow-up of the Economic and Social Council was held in New York from 22 to 25 May 2017. The forum was chaired by the President of the Council, Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava (Zimbabwe). It brought together a large number of high-level participants, including 20 ministers and vice-ministers, as well as numerous high-level government officials in the areas of finance, foreign affairs and development cooperation. An unprecedented number of Executive Directors from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (24), as well as senior officials from the United Nations system and other international organizations, including the major institutional stakeholders of the financing for development follow-up process, attended the forum. There was also strong representation from civil society organizations, the business sector and local authorities.

2. The first day of the ministerial segment featured a special high-level meeting with the World Bank Group, IMF, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Its morning session provided an opportunity for the heads of the major institutional

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[1] A more comprehensive summary of the forum on financing for development follow-up of 2017 is included in a publication available from www.un.org/esa/ffd.

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stakeholders, as well as their intergovernmental organizations, to interact with their United Nations counterparts on issues of common interest in the follow-up to the financing for development outcomes. A salient feature of the special high-level meeting was the interactive dialogue with the representatives of intergovernmental bodies and senior management of the World Bank Group, IMF and UNCTAD on two themes: (a) fostering policy coherence in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda; and (b) inequalities and inclusive growth. The second day of the ministerial segment was structured in the form of three ministerial round tables on steps taken towards the implementation of commitments contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other financing for development follow-up outcomes, followed by the general debate.

3. The expert segment consisted of four multi-stakeholder thematic round tables and two expert discussions. In addition, a stakeholder dialogue was organized with the participation of civil society, the business sector and local authorities, followed by a panel discussion on the outcomes of the forums mandated by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and updates on key voluntary initiatives launched at the third International Conference on Financing for Development.

4. The participants had before them a note by the Secretary-General entitled "Financing for development: progress and prospects" (E/FFDF/2017/2). The report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development of 2017 provided the major substantive input.

II. Opening of the forum on financing for development follow-up

5. The opening of the forum featured statements by the President of the Economic and Social Council; the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations (video message); the Managing Director of IMF, Christine Lagarde (video message); the Senior Vice-President for the 2030 Development Agenda, United Nations Relations and Partnerships of the World Bank Group, Mahmoud Mohieldin; and the Deputy Director General of WTO, Yonov Frederick Agah.

6. The President of the Economic and Social Council pointed out that the world was facing a host of economic, social, environmental and humanitarian challenges, and that realizing the Sustainable Development Goals in this difficult environment made the full and timely implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda more important than ever. Reaching consensus on a substantive and comprehensive outcome document of the forum, reaffirming key elements of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and creating new commitments on policies and actions sent a strong signal that the international community remained deeply committed to multilateralism and the global partnership for sustainable development. In that regard, the President of the Council congratulated the two co-facilitators, the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations and the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, on their impressive efforts to reach consensus on the outcome document of the forum, which would inform the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

7. The Deputy Secretary-General highlighted that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement provided the framework for sustainable development. Referring to the challenging global environment, the Deputy Secretary-General emphasized the need for additional long-term high-quality investments to stimulate sustainable low-carbon growth and urgent measures to address the needs of the poor and vulnerable. The forum provided an opportunity to reaffirm the collective commitment of governments and all stakeholders to sustainable development and multilateralism.

8. Ms. Lagarde outlined five key ways in which IMF was working to advance the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda: (a) strengthening the global financial architecture while also helping countries with external financing to support their development efforts; (b) supporting countries in strengthening domestic revenue mobilization; (c) evaluating the negative impact of illicit financial flows, including tax evasion and criminal activity with regard to development efforts, and supporting relevant reforms; (d) engaging with small States to help them build their macroeconomic and financial resilience to natural disasters and climate change; and (e) promoting debt sustainability and exploring innovative instruments to manage public debt.

9. Mr. Mohieldin emphasized that, in order to move the discussion from "billions" in official development assistance (ODA) to "trillions" in investments of all kinds, multilateral development banks needed to change the way they worked on development finance. The World Bank Group had made some progress, including through: (a) a record replenishment of $75 billion for the World Bank Group's International Development Association; (b) working closely with IMF and other multilateral development banks to increase the effectiveness of domestic resource mobilization, develop a tax policy assessment framework and increase the voice of developing countries in the global discussion on tax issues; and (c) crowding in the private sector, whenever possible.

10. Mr. Agah highlighted the importance of multilateral trade agreements in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. In that regard, he emphasized that trade was a driver of economic growth. However, trade growth underperformed gross domestic product (GDP) growth after the financial crisis of 2008, and the right policy mix was needed to achieve the recovery of trade. The rules-based multilateral trading system was indispensable because it brought predictability, security and sustainability to international relations. The Deputy Director General drew the conclusion that priority should be given to strengthening the system and delivering new reforms in order to ensure that WTO delivered new outcomes for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

III. Statements by institutional stakeholders

11. Statements were made by the President of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD, Christopher Onyanga Aparr (Uganda); the Executive Secretary of the Joint World Bank/IMF Development Committee, Yvonne Tsikata; and the Deputy Secretary of the International Monetary and Financial Committee of IMF, Patricia Alonso-Gamo. Keynote presentations were also delivered by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Wu Hongbo (as Chair of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development); the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Mukhisa Kituyi (video message); the Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Tegegnework Gettu (on behalf of the United Nations Development Group); and the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Shamshad Akhtar (on behalf of the regional commissions). Keynote presentations were followed by a general debate.

12. Mr. Aparr underscored that globalization must be inclusive and that reviving global solidarity and partnership was a vital part of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. He suggested that the forum consider: (a) how developing countries could mobilize domestic and international resources in the context of weak trade growth; (b) what reforms would be required to create inclusive international financial markets and investment regimes; (c) how to ensure participation by developing countries in

global economic governance; and (d) how developing countries could take advantage of new opportunities, including e-commerce.

13. Ms. Tsikata shared a brief overview of the ninety-fifth meeting of the Joint World Bank/IMF Development Committee held in Washington, D.C., on 22 April 2017. At the meeting, Governors had called on the World Bank Group and IMF to provide advice and support to advance inclusive and sustainable growth policies, deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and protect the most vulnerable. Development Committee members also underscored that reducing inequality was necessary to ensure long-term and sustainable growth. Governors supported the World Bank Group's scaled-up activities in crisis preparedness, prevention and response through investments to address the root causes and drivers of fragility by helping countries build institutional and social resilience.

14. Ms. Alonso-Gamo outlined three elements of the IMF strategy: structural, fiscal and monetary policies. IMF would continue to support its membership to deliver on its financing for development follow-up commitments by: (a) providing policy advice, financial support and capacity development; (b) facilitating multilateral solutions across countries to meet global challenges; and (c) providing support to low-income countries, commodity exporters and small and fragile States.

15. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs officially launched the report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development for 2017 and presented its key findings. He pointed out that a combination of national actions and international cooperation could help change the current trajectory of the global economy and support countries towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, long-term and quality investments in sustainable development had to be increased. In that connection, the Task Force proposed measures to address impediments to private investments and enhance public investments in infrastructure and the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. Mr. Kituyi expressed concern about the recent ODA trends, which affected the realization of core ODA targets. There was a need to strengthen smart partnerships with the private sector, including through more action-oriented initiatives, such as the sustainable stock exchange initiative. On the other hand, the risks of public-private partnerships must be jointly studied so that they did not increase the debt burdens of future generations. Mr. Kituyi reminded participants that there were no shortcuts to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

17. Mr. Gettu emphasized that it was critical to mobilize long-term investment for sustainable development and provide fiscally sustainable and nationally appropriate social protection to assist the poorest and most vulnerable. Resources for hosting refugees in donor countries should not dilute ODA for long-term sustainable development. UNDP was supporting countries in the development of integrated financing frameworks with a focus on catalytic interventions, crowding in private investments and building partnerships.

18. Ms. Akhtar shared that growing distrust of globalization was leading to short-sighted protectionist measures and the unanticipated tightening of monetary policy, compounding global uncertainty, which could lower growth in the Asia-Pacific region. Policies needed to play a greater role in expanding social safety nets and reducing inequality. Regional commissions had made efforts to support the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda with a focus on four key areas: domestic resource mobilization, efficiency of public financial management, fostering infrastructure investment and financial inclusion.

IV. Interactive dialogue with intergovernmental bodies of major institutional stakeholders

19. The interactive dialogue was chaired by the President of the Economic and Social Council and moderated by Sara Eisen of CNBC. Opening remarks were delivered by the President of the Council; the Co-Dean of the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank Group, Hervé de Villeroché; Executive Director of IMF Hazem Beblawi (on behalf of the Dean of the Board of Executive Directors of IMF); and the President of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD, Christopher Onyanga Aparr.

20. The President of the Economic and Social Council underscored that major institutional stakeholders in financing for development follow-up were aligning their workflows in an unprecedented manner with United Nations-led outcomes, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Building on a strong foundation of growth, specific policies and approaches could both improve growth and reduce inequality. He highlighted that investment in inclusive and resilient infrastructure was an important way to address inequality in access to markets, finance and technology.

21. Mr. de Villeroché noted that the forum was a critical platform for monitoring financing commitments and financing initiatives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. He emphasized that ODA needed to be used strategically to catalyse additional private capital. The World Bank Group's International Development Association had reached a record replenishment of $75 billion. The International Finance Corporation had adopted a new long-term strategy to scale impact investing from the private sector and strengthen strategic engagement in key sectors in developing countries. The World Bank Group was fully committed to using its balance sheet to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

22. Mr. Beblawi noted close parallels between the global economic recovery and a sequence of actions by major institutional stakeholders. He informed the forum that, later in the week, the IMF Executive Board would consider proposals to improve the debt sustainability framework for low-income members of IMF. He acknowledged the importance of continued cooperation with other major institutional stakeholders in accordance with their respective mandates to implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

23. Mr. Aparr noted that all countries needed to grow their exports and reform their trade to kick-start domestic revenue collection at the national level. Actions by development banks and the private sector were needed to address obstacles to investment in least developed countries. It was also key to hold donors accountable for their ODA commitments to those countries. The speaker also called for more inclusive discussions on the working out of sovereign debt at the United Nations.

24. The dialogue addressed two themes: (a) fostering policy coherence in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda; and (b) inequalities and inclusive growth. Under the first theme, the lead discussants were: Executive Director of the World Bank Group Frank Heemskerk; the Chair of the IMF Executive Board Committee for Liaison with the World Bank, the United Nations and other International Organizations, Daouda Sembene; and the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, Nabeel Munir (Pakistan).

25. Mr. Heemskerk commented that the United Nations could promote coherence by benchmarking the performance of Member States and putting peer pressure on the private sector. There was a need for a tool box for engaging smaller companies. The best leveraging machine continued to be a well-functioning State. In that

context, he mentioned that International Development Association resources should be spent effectively and target the poorest of the poor.

26. Mr. Sembene noted that growth prospects had weakened, particularly for low-income countries. IMF supported capacity-building with regard to disaster risk management and public financial management for fragile States and low-income countries. In addition, IMF had taken measures to support low-income countries through increasing concessional finance and debt relief. IMF had also increased access to concessional finance for countries affected by natural disasters. The Fund continued to work on promoting global economic and financial stability through strengthening the global financial safety net and global financial regulatory reforms.

27. Mr. Munir noted that, at the national level, countries continued to face challenges in formulating multisectoral, integrated and coherent policies and actions towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. More international support for developing those policies was required, particularly for countries in special situations. The existing regional mechanisms must continue to adapt their work programmes to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and more must be done to increase the coherence between national policies and global development priorities.

28. In the interactive discussion, there was a call for international trade and financial institutions to scale up their policy and financial support for low-income countries and fragile States with regard to public financial management and domestic resource mobilization, financial inclusion and combating illicit financial flows. There was emphasis on the need to mainstream trade in the Sustainable Development Goals and build trade capacity. In that regard, three priorities were highlighted: (a) trade facilitation reforms; (b) establishing new global rules for e-commerce; and (c) improving the ability of small businesses to access finance.

29. Under the second theme, the lead discussants were: Executive Director of the World Bank Group Patience Bongiwe Kunene; Executive Director of IMF Nancy Gail Horsman; Executive Director of IMF Masaaki Kaizuka; and the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, Jürgen Schulz (Germany).

30. Ms. Kunene referred to two issues relating to inequality: access and quality. She noted that one of the most visible gaps was connectedness. For example, the pace of urbanization in Africa was fast, whereas connectedness among cities was low. To address that, there should be demand-led strategies to create evidence-based solutions that used data.

31. Ms. Horsman pointed out that, in most advanced and emerging economies, inequality increased after the financial crisis of 2008. IMF research indicated that technological change, more than integration, was the leading factor behind the falling income of labour in advanced economies and was therefore the driver of inequality. Protectionism was not the answer. IMF had responded by providing policy advice that supported inclusive growth and encouraged national authorities to boost productivity.

32. Mr. Kaizuka noted that IMF respected country specificities, such as the lack of capacity to implement policies, in formulating policy advice. IMF also used a milestone approach to monitor the impact of interventions that would materialize over the long term. He called for effective collaboration among institutions based on comparative advantages and mandates.

33. Mr. Schulz underscored that inequality had been at the core of the agenda of the Economic and Social Council. There was a need to address systemic issues and establish inclusive institutions at all levels. There was also a need for the right policies and regulations to ensure that everyone could benefit from the economic

gains of a society. Strengthening the quality and the further disaggregation of data was essential in that respect.

34. During the interactive discussion, it was noted that technology and the digital economy provided opportunities, but also led to inequalities. The World Bank Group and IMF also highlighted the important work they had done to address gender equality. In addition, social protection was discussed, including the IMF target for "social protection floors" in the formulation of budgets for social safeguards in most low-income countries. With regard to financing, enhanced engagement of the private sector to fill the financing gap was emphasized, including through risk mitigation measures. It was also stressed that trade finance played a key role in addressing inequalities in trade.

V. Ministerial round tables: steps taken towards the implementation of commitments contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and other financing for development follow-up outcomes

Ministerial round table 1

35. The round table was chaired by the President of the Economic and Social Council and moderated by the Deputy Managing Director of IMF, Tao Zhang. Presentations were made by: the Vice-President and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Panama, Isabel de Saint Malo de Alvarado; the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission, Neven Mimica; the State Minister, Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation of Ethiopia, Admasu Nebebe; the Chief of Staff of the Department of Finance and Undersecretary for Privatization and Office of Special Concerns of the Philippines, Karen Singson; the Head of the Eurasian Development Bank, Dmitry Pankin; and Principal of the Abraaj Group Saqib Rashid.

36. Mr. Zhang noted that domestic resource mobilization was a core element of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Real progress had been made in increasing tax revenues over the past 15 years, especially in low-income countries. IMF remained fully committed to building domestic revenue capacity in developing countries and supported a wide range of multilateral initiatives, such as the Addis Tax Initiative and the Platform for Collaboration on Tax.

37. Ms. de Alvarado highlighted that Panama had fully integrated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into its national sustainable development strategy, with the majority of public investments earmarked for Sustainable Development Goals. To ensure broad buy-in, Panama had initiated a national dialogue with key stakeholders. Sustained economic growth, proper fiscal incentives and openness were key components that had allowed Panama to attract domestic and foreign investment in support of the Goals. The Vice-President called on the international community to explore ways in which foreign investments could promote the transfer of technology and know-how to developing countries.

38. Mr. Mimica noted that, in 2016-2017, the European Commission had allocated millions of euros in support of international tax cooperation. The Commission had stimulated greater public and private investment in the Sustainable Development Goals through a new European external investment plan. It had also increased ODA for the fourth consecutive year in 2016. The new European Consensus on Development, to be signed in June 2017, would reaffirm the collective European Union commitment on ODA (0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI)) with a more ambitions commitment to least developed countries.

39. Mr. Nebebe outlined the road map of policy actions Ethiopia had developed for implementing the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. In recent years, Ethiopia had invested 25 per cent of its GDP in infrastructure, education, health and social protection policies to safeguard vulnerable people. Ethiopia would continue to work with bilateral and multilateral partners to improve tax revenue collection. New policies had also been enacted on public-private partnerships to ensure the fair sharing of risks and rewards between the public and private sector.

40. Ms. Singson emphasized that the Philippines would implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda by shifting towards an investment-driven economy. The new government was urgently tackling resource mobilization challenges by cutting red tape, modernizing revenue collection, improving customs procedures and pursuing a government-wide crackdown on tax evasion. It planned to lower personal income and corporate tax rates, while increasing value added tax and excise tax rates on oil. Such policies would lead to increased revenue collection, which should promote inclusive economic growth, reduce poverty and help the Philippines become an upper-middle-income country by 2022.

41. Mr. Pankin noted that the landlocked client countries of the Eurasian Development Bank faced particular challenges in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in the areas of transport and trade facilitation. Landlocked developing countries had seen much lower growth than other developing countries. The solution lay not in unconditional trade liberalization and tariff reduction, but rather in regional cooperation. The Eurasian Development Bank would foster member State cooperation and integration by linking the value chains present in the region, with a focus on infrastructure development projects and the development of high value-added production and energy efficiency programmes.

42. Mr. Rashid described how more investors were expanding their investing in environmental, social and governance issues by using the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a coherent road map for sustainable development, actively seeking out companies that had made strides on corporate governance, labour relations and environmental policies. He called for countries to move towards a more dynamic regulatory environment in sectors such as health and education while ensuring a high standard of service delivery. He noted that large-scale investment in sectoral ecosystems was required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ministerial round table 2

43. The round table was chaired by the President of the Economic and Social Council and moderated by the Senior Vice-President for the 2030 Development Agenda, United Nations Relations and Partnerships of the World Bank Group, Mahmoud Mohieldin. Presentations were made by the Minister for Industry of Nepal, Nabindra Raj Joshi; the Minister for Finance and National Planning of Tonga, Tevita Lavemaau; the Undersecretary of Economic and Development Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Väino Reinart; the Head of the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation, Agustín García-López; and the Executive Mayor of Rustenberg, South Africa, Mpho Khunou.

44. Mr. Mohieldin highlighted that demographic pressures would increase the need for jobs and infrastructure. The right balance between public and private finance to ensure affordable, accessible, reliable and climate-friendly infrastructure would be needed. While current infrastructure spending in developing countries would still largely come from public sources, there was much room for private and commercial financing to expand. Multilateral development banks were well

positioned to leverage more investment into infrastructure at the national and subnational levels.

45. Mr. Joshi discussed the challenges to the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in Nepal. Efforts were under way to upgrade domestic infrastructure and nourish entrepreneurship, including at the village level. Domestic resource mobilization was also a core priority and important progress had been made in that regard. The tax-to-GDP ratio of Nepal was at 23 per cent, up from 9 per cent 20 years ago. Nepal was seeking more access to concessional finance with a focus on catalytic aid that could help crowd in private investment, specifically into infrastructure.

46. Mr. Lavemaau highlighted that the national development priorities of Tonga included a knowledge-based economy, good governance, infrastructure development, gender equality, environment protection and enhanced resilience to climate change. With regard to domestic resource mobilization, future reforms would aim at more progressive taxation, while more expenditure should target the combating of non-communicable diseases. The speaker stressed that ODA and other international support was also critical and further emphasized that multilateral development banks should factor the vulnerability of small island developing States into their lending decisions.

47. Mr. Reinart emphasized that the rule of law and good governance had been critical to enabling Estonia to become a high-income economy. Estonia had adopted a new development cooperation policy based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Its primary focus was on supporting democracy, advancing peace and stability, guaranteeing human rights and promoting economic growth. Estonia had also continually increased its percentage of ODA. Estonia had also benefited from digital solutions, including the use of online tax declarations, e-health tools and online voting, which had resulted in economic development and helped reduce corruption.

48. Mr. García-López highlighted that, in 2016, ODA to countries in Latin America had declined, and accounted for only 4.6 per cent of the total. The speaker stressed that it was crucial to comply with ODA commitments, in particular in least developed countries and in Africa. It was also important to address the graduation concerns of low-income countries, including through methodologies for allocating resources that were not confined to per capita income. In that context, it was important to include the United Nations in the discussion on Total Official Support for Sustainable Development.

49. Mr. Khunou shared the perspective of local governments in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. He emphasized that investments in urban areas needed to be enhanced dramatically and that strengthening domestic resource mobilization could be achieved by diversifying local government resources and regulatory reform. Multilateral development banks and national development banks could also help by crowding in local investment. He called on national governments to guide international donors towards greater engagement at the subnational level.

Ministerial round table 3

50. The round table was chaired by the President of the Economic and Social Council and moderated by the Deputy Director-General of WTO, Yonov Frederick Agah. Presentations were made by: the Secretary of Planning of Guatemala, Miguel Ángel Estuardo Moir Sandoval; the Minister for Finance and Economic Development of Kiribati, Teuea Toatu; the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Madagascar, Modeste Randrianarivony; the Undersecretary of

International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador, Carola Iñiguez Zambrano; the Deputy Head of the Global Agenda Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Inger Buxton; and the Executive Director of the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD), Fanwell Kenala Bokosi.

51. Mr. Agah outlined the WTO implementation of concrete commitments in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including a ministerial decision eliminating export subsidies and setting out new rules on export credits. The entry into force of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation was another important development in the effort to reduce bureaucracy and the cost of trade. WTO also allowed improved access to affordable medicines by developing countries. Outstanding challenges included subsidies for fisheries.

52. Mr. Sandoval highlighted that the national development plan of Guatemala linked the priorities of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with public policies and its budget, prioritizing food security, nutrition, education and democratic institutions. Guatemala had also improved its institutional framework and monitoring processes with respect to the judicial and tax systems. In addition, Guatemala had passed an anti-money-laundering law to combat illicit financial flows. The speaker also emphasized that ODA, South-South cooperation and market access remained crucial for developing countries.

53. Mr. Toatu explained the national development plan of Kiribati with respect to strengthening the financial framework, addressing international debt, managing public expenditure and implementing tax and subsidy reforms. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals required infrastructure investment and greater institutional capacity. Flexible and predictable ODA and multilateral financing were essential to addressing those challenges. Kiribati would continue to leverage national savings to attract concessional funding and funding from other countries.

54. Mr. Randrianarivony highlighted that the national implementation plan of Madagascar focused on: (a) ensuring the rule of law; (b) creating a stable and inclusive financial system; (c) improving the fiscal system; (d) promoting public-private partnerships and ensuring that private and public services were accountable, effective and efficient; (e) streamlining the use of capital; (f) creating a system for information on and monitoring of the mobilization of domestic resources; (g) updating sectoral policies and raising awareness through workshops on several Sustainable Development Goals; and (h) ensuring better coordination with development partners.

55. Ms. Zambrano highlighted that enhancement of domestic revenue collection was crucial to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals. She called for reforms of the international financial system to address tax evasion. In February 2017, Ecuador had held a national referendum and became the first country in the world to prevent individuals who had financial accounts in tax havens from being elected to office. The speaker also called for the upgrading of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters to an intergovernmental body.

56. Ms. Buxton mentioned that Sweden had produced a report on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda which included illustrative examples, challenges to implementation, lessons learned and relevant conclusions. Sweden used a gender-based approach in its budget and provided step-by-step training on gender equality assessments to all actors involved in national budgeting. At the international level, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency had created an instrument to assist with leveraging private capital for development and managing the associated risks.

57. Mr. Bokosi welcomed all efforts to implement fiscal measures focused on promoting gender equality and supporting disabled people. He stressed that it was important to improve tax cooperation, including by establishing an international tax body within the United Nations. The speaker also noted that the Global Infrastructure Forum should go beyond issues of blended finance and public-private partnerships and urged donor partners to fulfil their ODA commitments.

Interactive discussion

58. During the interactive discussion, speakers stressed that more work was needed to translate the commitments contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to the national level. There were also calls to align the financing for development follow-up agenda more strongly with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including with regard to human rights and environmental issues.

59. Several speakers highlighted the need for progressive taxation policies in order to fight poverty and inequality. One speaker mentioned that tobacco taxation was a useful tool to increase domestic resources. Others mentioned that it was critical to effectively tackle corporate tax avoidance and illicit financial flows. Several speakers expressed their appreciation for the work of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters and called for its upgrade to an intergovernmental body.

60. Some participants noted that it was crucial to put in place the right regulatory framework that provided for proper incentives for capital to flow into sustainable development. Participants highlighted that the United Nations was the proper place to explore guidelines for public-private partnerships to ensure the fair sharing of risks and rewards, clear accountability mechanisms and adherence to social and environmental standards.

61. Speakers stressed the importance of meeting the 0.7 per cent commitment of ODA/GNI, as well as the need for a more nuanced approach to graduation that went beyond measures of per capita income. More progress was also needed in improving development effectiveness, especially in terms of country ownership.

62. Speakers further highlighted that the Aid for Trade initiative could play an important role in trade facilitation but also should be geared towards increasing compliance with international labour standards. Some participants called on the WTO Ministerial Conference, to be held in Buenos Aires in December 2017, to focus on completing the Doha Development Agenda.

63. Some speakers called for international action on the commitment in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to work towards a global consensus on guidelines for debtor and creditor responsibilities. Several speakers highlighted the need to strengthen existing and develop new links between civil society and governments, and to create integrated strategies to meet the Sustainable Development Goals.

VI. General debate

64. During the general debate, more than 80 representatives of Member States took the floor, including 19 ministers and vice-ministers, as well as other high-level government officials. Statements were also made by representatives of United Nations agencies and civil society organizations. Joint statements were delivered by representatives from the Group of 77 and China, the European Union, the Group of African States, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Alliance of Small Island

States, the Caribbean Community and a group of countries in support of middle-income countries.

65. Delegations welcomed the report of the Inter-Agency Task Force as important input to the forum, including its intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations. Several speakers stressed its robust and well-balanced nature and called it a sound basis for reflection on progress and gaps in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

66. Countries acknowledged the significant impact of the challenging global environment on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including difficult macroeconomic conditions, as well as humanitarian crises and conflicts. In order to ensure that the current global trajectory would not jeopardize the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, Member States called for accelerated national and international efforts to implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

67. Several countries outlined their efforts to develop national action plans to implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. It was highlighted that the forum should continue to provide a platform for sharing national experiences in mainstreaming the Addis Ababa Action Agenda into domestic policies and reforms.

68. Countries underlined the importance of international conventions and agreements, including the Paris Agreement. There were strong calls for further climate action and predictable and sustainable support, taking into account the specific needs and special circumstances of developing countries. Countries also called for transformative actions on gender and highlighted the need to better consider the impact of development finance on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

69. Many delegations emphasized the need for greater investment in quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure. National, regional and multilateral development banks should continue to leverage private investment. In that connection, countries also emphasized the need for measures to assist poor and vulnerable people, including through social protection systems.

70. Delegations underlined the importance of domestic resource mobilization. Several speakers highlighted the need to fight corruption, increase transparency and enhance public resource management. Countries emphasized the importance of effective and efficient tax systems, including through greater tax cooperation and enhanced capacity-building. Developing countries called for an upgrade of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Mattersto an intergovernmental body. Countries also reaffirmed the commitment to substantially reduce illicit financial flows by 2030.

71. To fully tap into private finance at the national and international levels, countries noted the importance of increasing the volume and quality of domestic and foreign investment and pursuing policies that better aligned those flows with sustainable development. Delegations underlined the importance of further expanding financial inclusion across all segments of society, particularly women and youth.

72. Several delegations expressed concern about a decrease in ODA to least developed countries and called on donors to meet their commitments and to set a target to provide at least 0.2 per cent ODA/GNI to least developed countries. Countries also highlighted the potential of catalysing additional finance from other sources and through appropriately designed risk-sharing instruments. A few delegations emphasized the importance of adhering to the shared principles of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

73. Member States emphasized that trade remained an engine for sustainable development. Developing countries expressed alarm at the increase in the protectionist rhetoric and tendencies of some developed countries and reaffirmed the importance of a universal, rules-based, open, transparent, predictable, inclusive, non-discriminatory and equitable trading system under WTO.

74. Several delegations urged international financial institutions to consider the impact of indebtedness and called for further action on debt crisis prevention and market-based solutions for sovereign debt restructuring. Several developing countries also called for debt relief measures in cases of severe debt distress. Calls were made to improve global economic governance, including through giving greater voice and participation to developing countries in international financial institutions and standard and norm-setting bodies.

75. Countries noted the important progress that had been made in facilitating access to many technologies, but expressed concern about significant digital divides across and within countries. Many delegations pointed out the unique challenges faced particularly by African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, as well as middle-income countries and countries in conflict and post-conflict situations.

VII. Expert segment

Panel discussion: report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development for 2017

76. The panel discussion was chaired by the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, Marie Chatardova (Czechia). Opening remarks were delivered by the Director of the Financing for Development Office in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, Alexander Trepelkov (on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs). The Chief of the Policy Analysis and Development Branch in the Financing for Development Office of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Shari Spiegel, moderated the discussion. The panellists were representatives of the five major institutional stakeholders of the financing for development follow-up process: the Deputy Director-General of WTO, Yonov Frederick Agah; the Director of the Strategy Policy and Review Department at IMF, Siddharth Tiwari; the Director of the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies for UNCTAD, Richard Kozul-Wright; the Director of Strategic Policy of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support at UNDP, Pedro Conceição; and the Adviser on Financing for Development at the World Bank Group, David Kuijper.

77. Mr. Trepelkov delivered opening remarks in which he set the stage for the expert round tables and suggested that the members of the Inter-Agency Task Force build on the discussions in the next report. Ms. Spiegel described the structure and key findings of the report, highlighting the challenging global economic environment and its implication for the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

78. Mr. Agah emphasized the importance of multilateralism in resisting protectionism, which would hurt the poor, and the role of policies in ensuring that the benefits of trade were shared widely and equitably. He underscored that strengthening rules-based multilateral trading systems would contribute to inclusive growth. Technological innovation and automation would be additional challenges, since they would have major impacts on businesses, employment and the future of trade. Those would have to be addressed by a cross-cutting policy mix.

79. Mr. Tiwari pointed out the need for efforts at all levels to implement the financing for development follow-up outcomes, especially sustainable infrastructure investments. Mr. Tiwari also referred to the ratio of tax revenues to GDP, which were below 15 per cent and were therefore inadequate for the provision of basic public services in many developing countries. Medium-term revenue strategies and stronger enforcement mechanisms could play critical roles in that regard.

80. Mr. Kozul-Wright stressed the need for a sustainable growth strategy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Post-financial crisis growth had been too slow and was not inclusive. Investment had also been insufficient because of the slowdown in global demand from developed economies, the short-term and rent-seeking behaviour of corporations and high debt levels. Developing countries therefore needed to expand their fiscal spaces. In addition to strengthening domestic resource mobilization, tax avoidance and tax evasion would also need to be addressed, as well as a mechanism to work out debt.

81. Mr. Conceição stated that UNDP had been integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into strategies, plans and budgets. Partner countries were increasingly asking about how they should prioritize the Sustainable Development Goals and how they could be financed. UNDP would support countries in the implementation of integrated national financing frameworks, which could provide an integrated approach on ways to mobilize and allocate resources with national sustainable development priorities. State-contingent financing instruments were promising options that could allow countries to address risks.

82. Mr. Kuijper suggested that the biggest challenges remained in fragile States and in countries under environmental stress, which were the home to 75 per cent of the poor. ODA and other international public finance would play a critical role in that regard. Efforts to better leverage ODA, as well as increase its effectiveness, should be taken to address fundamental issues such as governance, regulatory environments and capacity-building. In addition, one of the best ways to achieve progress would be to ensure gender equality.

83. During the interactive discussion, speakers addressed a variety of issues for consideration by the Inter-Agency Task Force, including the role of illicit financial flows, the potential of tobacco taxation for domestic resource mobilization and the impact of trade on growth and labour markets.

Round table A: domestic and international public resources

84. The round table was chaired by the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, Marie Chatardova, and moderated by the Policy Coordinator of the Financial Transparency Coalition, Pooja Rangaprasad. Presentations were made by the Mayor of Belize City, Darrell Bradley; the Commissioner General of the Liberia Revenue Authority, Elfrieda Stewart Tamba; the Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Development at the Agence Française de Développement, Philippe Orliange; and the Director of the Development Cooperation Directorate of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Jorge Moreira da Silva.

85. At the outset, Ms. Rangaprasad emphasized the critical role of domestic and international public resources and highlighted the importance of gender as a cross-cutting issue in that context, such as supporting gender equality through addressing gender biases in tax structures and budgeting processes.

86. Mr. Bradley noted the central role of local and regional governments for public resource mobilization and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. He pointed out the insufficient central government transfers, which increased the pressure for revenue mobilization from taxes, fees and other sources at the local

level. In 2013, the Belize City Council issued a general obligation bond to finance public road infrastructure. The use of such financing instruments required good governance, transparency, stakeholder engagement and a conducive legal, structural and policy framework.

87. Ms. Tamba described how Liberia had implemented effective public finance policies and tools that contributed to strong economic growth from 2006 to 2013. However, growth rates had declined significantly as a result of the Ebola crisis. International public funds, including grants, would remain a critical source of financing for Liberia. To strengthen the use and management of public resources, Liberia utilized several frameworks, tools and initiatives, such as the Tax Administration Diagnostic Assessment Tool (TADAT), Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) assessments and Tax Inspectors Without Borders.

88. Mr. Orliange highlighted the role development banks played in long-term financing for sustainable development. In that context, he outlined the work of the International Development Finance Club, which provided a collaborative platform through which members shared experiences and combined financial resources. Specific areas of focus were climate change, sustainable urban development, access to project preparation and financing and increasing cooperation among its members.

89. Mr. da Silva presented preliminary ODA data for 2016. International aid peaked in 2016, partly as the result of increased domestic spending on refugees. At the same time, the share of ODA to least developed countries declined. Mr. da Silva provided an update on the status of the discussions on the modernization of the ODA measurement and the proposed measure of Total Official Support for Sustainable Development. OECD was also conducting research on linkages, synergies and trade-offs among different financing sources and instruments to understand their impacts, inform policy choices and reinforce accountability.

90. During the discussion, participants called for the further promotion of domestic resource mobilization through the strengthening of national tax systems and international cooperation on tax, for example through the Platform for Collaboration on Tax and the establishment of an intergovernmental body on international tax cooperation at the United Nations. Several participants agreed on the potential to support gender equality though tax reforms and gender-responsive budgeting. Participants urged countries to honour their ODA commitments and expressed their concern about the declining trend in ODA to least developed countries. Many participants also highlighted the importance of capacity-building at all levels, including for tax administration.

Round table B: domestic and international private business and finance

91. The round table was chaired by the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, Nabeel Munir, and moderated by the Senior President of YES Institute, Preeti Sinha. Presentations were made by the Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations, Courtenay Rattray; the Managing Director and Head of Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Finance, Americas, at BNP Paribas, Hervé Duteil; the Executive Managing Director of the Japan Innovation Network, Hiro Nishiguchi; the Chief of Competitive Intelligence at Banca de las Oportunidades, Colombia, Nidia Reyes; and the Lead Economist of the Development Research Group of the World Bank Group, Leora Klapper.

92. At the outset, Ms. Sinha drew attention to the potential of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to establish a link between the public and private sector for sustainable development. She also elaborated the potential of financial inclusion and impact investment to bridge the financing gap to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

93. Mr. Rattray presented the work of the "Group of Friends of SDG Financing", which aimed to identify ways to mobilize the trillions of dollars required for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The group targeted institutional stakeholders to instil a long-term orientation in global capital markets. The speaker underscored the need to build country capacity to develop projects that were viable for investments. Though some progress had been made, fiduciary responsibilities were still preventing the consideration of environmental, social and governance criteria in many countries.

94. Mr. Duteil noted that BNP Paribas had set 13 quantified targets towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals to be reached by 2018. He described how BNP Paribas would establish innovative tools for Sustainable Development Goal financing that addressed issues of critical importance to the private sector: yield, risks, liquidity and time horizon. He explained that impact investment would remain a niche and sustainability criteria would have to be included in products that met traditional investment standards.

95. Mr. Nishiguchi introduced the Sustainable Development Goal Holistic Innovation Platform (SHIP), promoting private sector innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals. The programme aimed to increase the pipeline of investable projects supporting Goal implementation and to accelerate progress in innovation. The programme provided support to an advanced innovation process by combining design thinking and lean start-up approaches during the critical incubation stage. As of the date of writing, the programme had supported the private sector in seven African countries with regard to Goals 3 and 7.

96. Ms. Reyes shared the experience of Colombia with regard to its national financial inclusion strategy, which focused on deepening financial inclusion in rural areas and promoting stronger use of financial services, the promotion of financing schemes for small and medium-sized enterprises and the development and implementation of a national financial and economic education strategy to promote financial literacy. As a result, more than 70 per cent of the adult population in Colombia now had a savings account, though a gap persisted between urban and rural access rates.

97. Ms. Klapper pointed out that the discussion on financial inclusion should move beyond credit to include account ownership and opportunities to store money. She stated that account ownership rates had grown significantly in the past years, though gaps still remained. Adequate policies and regulations and additional progress in consumer protection would be critical to the advancement of financial inclusion. Ms. Klapper also presented several country cases to illustrate the link between financial inclusion and the Sustainable Development Goals.

98. During the discussion, speakers supported the proposal to strengthen the quality of investments, including long-term investment, and emphasized the need to prepare a pipeline of investment-ready projects. The demand for risk sharing mechanisms for investments in sustainable development was reiterated. Some participants stressed the need to ensure that public-private partnerships served public interests and called for open and transparent discussions of guidelines at the United Nations. Speakers welcomed the discussion on financial inclusion and stressed the need for consumer protection.

Round table C: debt and systemic issues

99. The round table was chaired by the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, Nabeel Munir, and moderated by the Director of the Strategy Policy and Review Department at IMF, Siddharth Tiwari. Presentations were made by the Ambassador of Grenada to the United States of America, Angus Friday; an

economist of the Federal Ministry of Finance of Germany, Camillo von Müller; the Executive Director of the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-four on International Monetary Affairs and Development, Marilou Uy; and the Senior Officer on Finance for Development, Latindadd-Fundación Jubileo of Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Patricia Miranda.

100. At the outset, Mr. Tiwari shared that IMF was committed to improving the international financial architecture and the global financial safety net, with a strong, quota-based IMF at the centre. With regard to debt sustainability, IMF was close to the completion of its review of the debt sustainability framework, with a focus on prevention. There must be proper frameworks to encourage the early engagement of debt creditors towards efficient and timely restructuring.

101. Mr. Friday shared the experience of Grenada with regard to debt restructuring. He referred to the linkages between exposure to extreme events and higher levels of indebtedness, especially in small island developing States. Learning from the past, Grenada had implemented a home-grown programme focused on fiscal and structural adjustments; and introduced a "haircut" on principal and interest payments, as well as a hurricane clause, which ensured predetermined deferrals in case of a hurricane.

102. Mr. Müller presented relevant Group of 20 work on debt, undertaken under the German presidency of the Group of 20. He was of the view that GDP-linked bonds had the potential to contribute to debt sustainability, as they could generate fiscal space for issuers and reduce public debt services in difficult times. However, he felt that one should be aware that GDP-linked bonds could deliver very different results, depending on the design. For markets to accept the instrument, the availability of statistical data was a prerequisite.

103. Ms. Uy stressed that putting in the right mix of macroeconomic structural policies to manage global headwinds must be complemented by multilateral actions. She further reminded the round table that the tightening of financial markets in systemically important economies and the volatility of exchange rates could disrupt investment and growth. Therefore, better macroeconomic coordination was needed, and IMF and the Group of 20 could play important roles. Furthermore, her organization, the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-four on International Monetary Affairs and Development, called for comprehensive financial regulatory reforms.

104. Ms. Miranda highlighted the changing composition of debt, including the fact that there were more issuers of sovereign bonds in international markets and domestic debt was escalating. She made two recommendations. First, to address current external debt, the resolution of the General Assembly was a good start, but there was a need to go beyond. Second, to address new debt, it was important to take into account aggregate debt when assessing debt sustainability and to agree on a new debt ratio that showed debt service to fiscal revenue. The social impact of debt sustainability should also be assessed.

105. During the discussion, several participants warned of the risks of increasing debt burdens for the public sector through public-private partnerships. It was also stated that the promise to provide for the sound regulation of financial markets had not been delivered. In response, panellists explained that progress was being made and further action was pending the results of the evaluation conducted by the Financial Stability Board in that regard. The importance of transparency on debt levels was also highlighted by several speakers.

Round table D: trade, science, technology, innovation and capacity-building

106. The round table was chaired by the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, Cristián Barros Melet (Chile), and moderated by the Chief of the UNCTAD New York Office, Chantal Line Carpentier. Presentations were made by: the Executive Director of the Enhanced Integrated Framework, Ratnakar Adhikari; a trade negotiator for the Directorate General for Trade of the European Commission, Mark Henderson; the Chair of the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka, Sirimali Fernando; and the Head of Global Trade of BNY Mellon, Joon Kim.

107. Ms. Carpentier set the stage by highlighting the importance of action areas D and G of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and suggested that, instead of focusing narrowly on trade rules, action should be taken to promote capacity-building for custom agencies, facilitate economic diversification, strengthen regional integration and support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. She also pointed to the growing digital divide, including the low participation of developing countries in e-commerce.

108. Mr. Adhikari presented the work of the Enhanced Integrated Framework, a dedicated programme aimed at helping least developed countries harness the benefits of trade. The main challenges for least developed countries, especially those in the process of graduating, were the lack of adequate infrastructure, outdated technology, low productive capacities and insufficient trade financing. Mr. Adhikari argued that investments in the Aid for Trade initiative would have a high developmental impact. He also highlighted the importance of capacity-building, especially with regard to the oversight and implementation of national projects.

109. Mr. Henderson emphasized that trade had a positive impact on developing countries. The European Union provided support to initiatives such as Aid for Trade and Everything but Arms. Furthermore, the European Union had 28 economic partnership agreements in force and another 21 signed, which provided duty-free and quota-free market access and flexible rules of origin. The European Union had also adopted a trade strategy aimed at directly supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Finally, the European Union would also aim to strengthen the coherence of its trade policies with other aid activities through the new European Consensus on Development.

110. Ms. Fernando highlighted that the science, technology and innovation strategy of Sri Lanka focused on high-tech initiatives, techno-entrepreneurship and directed innovation to ensure contributions to economic, social and environmental development. As a result of the implementation of the strategy, there had been a shift towards experimental development and the commercialization of research. In addition, private investment in research and development had increased significantly. However, high migration rates of skilled workers and risk-averse financing mechanisms posed constraints to the implementation of the strategy.

111. Mr. Kim elaborated on the trends, opportunities and challenges in trade finance in past years, including changes to the regulatory landscape, the lack of standardization of jurisdictions and technological changes. The raising of capital requirements in combination with increased regulatory cost would lead to some banks de-risking and reconsidering their activities in certain countries and regions. Mr. Kim also elaborated on BNY Mellon's explorations of technological solutions to labour and paper intensive trade finance, for example through blockchain technology and artificial intelligence.

112. During the discussion, speakers emphasized the importance of inclusive trade in relation to sustainable development. Some speakers pointed to the implications of trade deficits for developing countries, especially least developed countries that

were in the process of graduating. Others raised the importance of ensuring that micro, small and medium-sized enterprises were able to participate and benefit from global markets, since they were the biggest creators of employment. In the discussion on science, technology and innovation, speakers highlighted the vital role of human capacity-building. The need for financing mechanisms for the early stages of the innovation process and for small and medium-sized enterprises was underscored. Furthermore, one speaker pointed out the need for impact assessments of technology to ensure its contribution to sustainable development.

Expert discussion 1: promoting international cooperation to combat illicit financial flows in order to foster sustainable development

113. The expert discussion was chaired by the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, Cristián Barros Melet, and moderated by the Director of the New York Office of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), New York Office, Simone Monasebian. Presentations were made by the Executive Director of International Operations for the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigations in the United States, Eric C. Hylton; the Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, S. O. Olaniyan; the Director of the Macroeconomic Policy Division of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Adam Elhiraika; and the Chief Executive of the Tax Justice Network, Alex Cobham.

114. Ms. Monasebian stressed the need to better use existing normative frameworks and conventions, including the United Nations Convention against Corruption, to deal with illicit financial flows and stolen asset recovery. UNODC was advancing the discussion by developing the methodology on monitoring illicit financial flows in the context of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

115. Mr. Hylton highlighted that the United States Treasury had increased its criminal enforcement on tax evasion, resulting in the seizure of many assets. While more needed to be done, recent years had seen an unprecedented increase in international cooperation on tax, including through the OECD Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes and the Platform for Collaboration on Tax. Whole-of-government approaches remained crucial at the national level to reduce tax evasion.

116. Mr. Olaniyan noted that illicit financial flows were the result of immoral practices and impunity. Criminal activities, commercial tax evasion and corruption were the three major reasons for those flows. Reversing that trend could generate desperately needed domestic revenues to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Nigeria had introduced measures to reduce corruption and curb illicit financial flows, including through a single treasury account policy. However, more concerted international efforts were crucial, including through enhanced exchanges of information and stronger cooperation on asset recovery and return.

117. Mr. Elhiraika underscored that the High-level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa had found that Africa lost $80 billion each year owing to trade mispricing, criminal activities and corruption. ECA and the African Union had formed a consortium to work with external stakeholders to help African countries curb illicit financial flows. Capacity-building was particularly critical for African governments, including in the area of tackling challenges related to trade misinvoicing and mispricing.

118. Mr. Cobham expressed the view that the central driver of illicit financial flows was not corruption in poor countries but rather financial secrecy in the major financial centres of the world, opaque corporate accounting and the existence of anonymous shell companies. The speaker also expressed his concern over corporate

lobbying to remove multinational tax avoidance from estimates of illicit financial flows, including in Sustainable Development Goal 16.4. Looking ahead, there was a need for greater availability and exchange of beneficial ownership information and enhanced public country-by-country reporting on illicit financial flows.

119. During the discussion, speakers emphasized that the recently adopted resolution of the General Assembly, resolution 71/213, on the promotion of international cooperation to combat illicit financial flows in order to foster sustainable development, was an important first step in initiating intergovernmental discussions on illicit financial flows at the United Nations. Some speakers called for the establishment of an intergovernmental body to deal with illicit financial flows. Participants also highlighted the need for a better understanding of the compositions of such flows. Speakers also stressed the need to step up capacity-building efforts through greater cooperation among enforcing agencies.

Expert discussion 2: specific challenges to finance sustainable development for countries in special situations

120. The expert discussion was chaired by the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, Cristián Barros Melet, and moderated by the Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support at UNDP, Magdy Martínez-Solimán. Presentations were made by the Minister for Finance and National Planning of Tonga, Tevita Lavemaau; the Finance Secretary of the Ministry of Finance of Bhutan, Nim Dorji; the Director of Multilateral Affairs of the Ministry of External Relations of Angola, Margarida Rose da Silva Izata; and the Deputy Chief Negotiator for Climate Change of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, William José Calvo Calvo.

121. Mr. Martínez-Solimán underscored that supporting countries in special situations was at the core of the work of UNDP and the United Nations Development Group. He provided the example of the UNDP/OECD joint initiative Tax Inspectors Without Borders as a mechanism to support such countries in retaining domestic resources through strengthened taxation policies.

122. Mr. Lavemaau highlighted the considerable structural constraints faced by small island developing States. To increase domestic revenue, Tonga had promoted good governance and introduced taxes on goods with negative externalities, including tobacco, fatty foods and sugary drinks. He noted the need for capacity-building support to strengthen tax administration and policies, upgrade customs and revenue administration and promote more effective public financial management. In addition, the donor community should deliver on ODA commitments and ensure greater access to concessional finance for small island developing States.

123. Mr. Dorji stressed that Bhutan faced particular challenges as both a least developed country and a landlocked developing country, including low productivity, reliance on a few commodities and youth unemployment. Bhutan had placed a strong focus on stability, the rule of law, increased institutional capacities, gross national happiness and cultural protection. More support was needed at the international level, in particular through the establishment of a global investment promotion regime. Finally, the speaker stressed the need to broaden eligibility criteria for accessing concessional finance, duty-free and quota-free trade and increasing Aid for Trade.

124. Ms. da Silva Izata noted the important role of international public finance in complementing national efforts to mobilize domestic resources. The Global Environment Facility, the Transitional Funding Mechanism and the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries should be supported to ensure that developing countries had access to capacity-building initiatives. Angola was

implementing a 10-step road map for a smooth transition from least developed country to middle-income country to ensure that economic vulnerabilities were addressed.

125. Mr. Calvo Calvo raised concern that discussions on middle-income countries and the graduation process did not capture the diversity and differences of middle-income countries. He recommended that a United Nations system-wide strategy on such countries be developed to support them in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The strategy would take into account vulnerabilities, economic performance and levels of achievement of internationally agreed goals.

126. During the discussion, speakers noted the importance of broadening the tax base in landlocked developing countries. Issues related to creating an enabling environment for private sector growth, capacity-building for bankable projects and public policy design were also addressed. The speakers emphasized the need for a multidimensional measurement of poverty that went beyond per capita income, the importance of climate finance and the importance of meaningful market access and capacity-building in trade.

Stakeholder dialogue

127. The stakeholder dialogue was chaired by the President of the Economic and Social Council and moderated by the Director of the Financing for Development Office in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Alexander Trepelkov. Presentations were made by the Managing Director of the Society for International Development, Stefano Prato; the Programme Director of Equidad de Género, Emilia Reyes; the Vice-President of Corporate Sustainability at Citigroup, Hui Chan; the Mayor of Blantyre, Malawi, Wild Ndipo; and the Mayor of Beira, Mozambique, Daviz Simango.

128. Mr. Trepelkov outlined the importance of the multi-stakeholder approach to the financing for development follow-up process and introduced the stakeholder workstreams by the Financing for Development Office, launched as a new mechanism for sustained and substantive engagement of civil society, the business sector and local authorities.

129. Mr. Prato outlined the civil society workstream on exploring public-private interfaces. The concept was inspired by the concerns of civil society regarding the overreliance on the private sector in the implementation of the public development agenda. The workstream focused on areas where the private sector was asked to support the provision of public goods beyond the traditional form of public-private partnerships. In addition to a concept paper on public-private interfaces, next steps would include a workshop and survey. The group would report on progress at the meeting of the forum on financing development follow-up in 2018.

130. Ms. Reyes emphasized the need to address gender in a cross-cutting way. Her intervention focused on structural transformations that arose through the pursuit of gender equality. She noted that long-term structural issues should be addressed and proposed that the Inter-Agency Task Force's next report include a comprehensive mapping of policy interventions on ways to mainstream women's rights within the financing for development follow-up agenda.

131. Ms. Chan, an active participant in the workstream on Sustainable Development Goal investing, highlighted ways that innovative financing structures could enable the achievement of sustainable objectives. She noted that, in order to meet the financing needs of the Sustainable Development Goals, further attention to risk mitigation and commercial viability of projects would be necessary. Blended

finance was a method to crowd in private investment, but the private sector should be engaged early and up front in structuring deals.

132. Mr. Ndipo, a participant in the workstream on strengthening municipal finance in least developed countries, in collaboration with the United Nations Capital Development Fund, called for local governments to be included as partners in developing urban and regional strategies for infrastructure investment. There was a need for financial decentralization and the mobilization of indigenous resources at the local level. He called for sound legal frameworks, sufficient resources and technical capacities to fulfil local potentials.

133. Mr. Simango highlighied the need for governments to take into account local realities in their decision-making. Guarantee systems, banking and access to resources were necessary at the local level. Cities should also be able to borrow and improve their credit in order to plan in the long term. Development finance institutions and multilateral development banks should have a role to play in supporting access to credit, including adaptation and mitigation funds.

134. During the interactive dialogue, speakers encouraged further discussion on ways local authorities could address inequalities through risk mitigation and blended finance. Participants called for a dedicated session on financing gender equality during the 2018 forum and stronger reference to youth issues. Prudence in the use of public-private partnerships and blended finance mechanisms was also called for.

Outcomes of the forums mandated by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and updates on key voluntary initiatives launched at the third International Conference on Financing for Development

135. The dialogue was chaired by the President of the Economic and Social Council and moderated by the Director of the Financing for Development Office in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Alexander Trepelkov. Presentations were made by the Manager of the Office of Strategic Planning and Development Effectiveness at the Inter-American Development Bank, Luis Miguel Castilla; the Acting Representative of the European Investment Bank, Carlota Cenalmor; the President of the Economic and Social Council; and the Chief of the Policy Analysis Branch of the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Shantanu Mukherjee.

136. Mr. Castilla highlighted the following lessons from the Global Infrastructure Forum held in 2017: (a) the gap between projects and investors must be bridged through good project preparation; (b) adaptability was an increasingly important aspect of a successful infrastructure project; (c) long-term engagement by governments was essential; (d) least developed countries faced the greatest challenge, but also presented the best opportunities; and (e) diversity could lead to better policy outcomes.

137. Ms. Cenalmor underscored the steps taken since the Global Infrastructure Forum of 2016, including the substantial increase in the number of joint initiatives, participation by national development banks and the recognition of the important role of the private sector. The next meeting of the Forum would be hosted by the Asian Development Bank in Bali, Indonesia, in October 2018.

138. The President of the Economic and Social Council outlined four recommendations from the Development Cooperation Forum held in 2016: (a) development cooperation should continue supporting the poorest and most vulnerable; (b) the Forum should advance learning on ways to strengthen incentives for the private sector to rethink its approach to sustainable value creation; (c) the

potential of South-South cooperation should be fully tapped; and (d) multilayered monitoring and review for effective development cooperation should be improved.

139. Mr. Mukherjee provided an overview of the second annual forum on science, technology and innovation, noting the following key takeaways: (a) given the cross-cutting nature of science, technology and innovation with regard to all the Sustainable Development Goals, the forum could be a good place to discuss the pursuit of an integrated agenda; (b) multi-stakeholder approaches were essential to using science, technology and innovation to achieve the Goals; (c) the forum should play a convening role to harness dynamism across different forums; and (d) advances in science, technology and innovation should be bolstered to enhance access and ensure that rapid developments did not build further divides.

140. During the interactive dialogue, the Netherlands provided updates on the Addis Tax Initiative and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. Australia also provided an update on a number of its voluntary initiatives focusing on the private sector.

VIII. Closing of the forum on financing for development follow-up

141. The forum adopted its procedural report (E/FFDF/2017/3), which contained the intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations and aspects of the organizational arrangements of the forum.

142. In his closing remarks, the President of the Economic and Social Council thanked all participants, noting the fruitful debates during the interactive dialogue with major institutional stakeholders, the importance of the ministerial round tables in sharing country experiences on mainstreaming the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the rich discussions in the expert segment.

United Nations A/72/115

General Assembly

Distr.: General
27 June 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Item 35 (b) of the preliminary list*
Prevention of armed conflict: strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution

United Nations activities in support of mediation

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

In its resolution 70/304, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its seventy-second session on United Nations activities in support of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request. It recognizes mediation as an important tool for conflict prevention, management and resolution; analyses five elements of mediation support, providing examples of United Nation activities within the framework of each element; and sets out the means through which the entities of the United Nations system can coordinate their support for mediation initiatives at different levels.

* A/72/50.

** The present report was originally submitted ahead of schedule, on Friday, 23 June 2017, at 4.28 p.m. Owing to formatting issues, a revised layout of the report was submitted on 27 June.

17-10503 (E) 070717

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 70/304 of 9 September 2016, the General Assembly requested that the Secretary-General report to the Assembly at its seventy-second session on United Nations activities in support of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. With regard to the item on strengthening the role of mediation, the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/304 was preceded by the adoption of Assembly resolutions 65/283 of 22 June 2011, 66/291 of 13 September 2012 and 68/303 of 31 July 2014, and the issuance of three reports. The first report (S/2009/189 of 8 April 2009) was prepared pursuant to a request by the Security Council, following its high-level meeting on mediation and settlement of disputes, held on 23 September 2008; the second report (A/66/811 of 25 June 2012) included the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation (annex I); and the third (A/70/328 of 19 August 2015) focused on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations on mediation.

3. In taking office as Secretary-General, I identified the inability to prevent crises as the most serious shortcoming of the international community, and have since reiterated my determination to prioritize prevention across the United Nations system. In my first address to the Security Council, on 10 January 2017, I placed emphasis on mediation as an important tool in this regard, informing the Council of my intention to launch an initiative to enhance the United Nations mediation capacity, both at Headquarters and in the field, and to support regional and national mediation efforts as part of my broader call for a surge in diplomacy for peace. In this report, I outline how the United Nations makes use of its capacities to support mediation while drawing on the diverse capabilities across the three pillars of peace and security, development and human rights. I also explain how I intend to strengthen our mediation support activities.

4. In the preparation of this report, the Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat engaged with Member States of the regional groupings of the General Assembly as well as with the Group of Friends of Mediation. The Department of Political Affairs also consulted with representatives of international, regional and subregional organizations, the Mediation Support Network (a global network of primarily non-governmental organizations that support peace processes) and the academic community.

II. Challenges to mediation

5. The number of major civil wars almost tripled in the decade to 2015. Between 2011 and 2015, there was a sixfold increase in fatalities in conflict, with 2014 being second only to 1994, the year of the Rwandan genocide, as the deadliest year since the end of the cold war.[1] The total number of casualties remains historically high, although 2016 did see declines in the numbers of both armed conflicts and fatalities.[2] Displacement attributable to armed violence is at the highest level on

[1] See Marie Allansson, Erik Melander and Lotta Themnér, "Organized violence, 1989-2016", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 54, No. 4 (2017). Civil war is defined as "an armed conflict with over 1,000 battle deaths per year and involving at least one State actor".

[2] Ibid. The number of conflicts (including "minor" armed conflicts with over 25 battle deaths per year) rose dramatically, from 42 to 52 in 2015, before falling to 49 in 2016. A total of 104,000 battle-related deaths was recorded for 2014; this figure fell to almost 98,000 in 2015 and to a little over 87,000 in 2016.

record, involving more than 65 million people. Moreover, at least 20 million people are experiencing or facing famine in (northern) Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, all countries with protracted conflicts and access constraints.

6. The pressing need for mediation and other efforts to end the conflicts of today is as urgent as the requirement that we direct greater attention, efforts and resources to preventing the conflicts of tomorrow. However, in too many settings, political and other challenges constrain the prospects for success.

7. A first set of challenges are generated as a consequence of the nature of the conflicts themselves. State fragility, the blurring of lines among political, criminal and ideological interests, as exemplified by the emergence of complex economies of conflict, and the unclear objectives of increasingly fragmented armed groups create multiple challenges for mediation engagement and the development of the kind of formal process that might conclude with a comprehensive peace agreement. In many settings, the use of terror tactics and the presence of extremist groups whose maximalist goals defy negotiation contribute to a preference for a military and security-centred response which can create complications for a comprehensive political approach.

8. Second, there has been a substantial rise in the internationalization and regionalization of conflicts, significantly complicating their resolution. The number of internationalized conflicts increased 10-fold between 1991 and 2016;[3] in some instances, Member States are appropriating local and national grievances for their own agendas or fuelling proxy wars, thereby making conflicts bloodier, longer and more intractable.

9. Third, we have seen an unprecedented acceleration in the speed and spread of information. The continuously expanding media landscape has changed both how we communicate and how narratives take hold of the public imagination. While the revolution in communications has many positive features, the rapid relaying of unverified information on, for example, a ceasefire violation, can raise expectations of a response and contribute to conflict escalation. Meanwhile, the ease of publicizing confidential contacts on social media can, in some circumstances, hamper the ability of a mediator or facilitator to engage with parties to the conflict through the kind of low-key interaction needed to assist opponents in finding solutions to their grievances.

10. Fourth, peace agreements are under increasing strain and are frequently punctuated by relapses into conflict, a tragic phenomenon which has been witnessed in South Sudan. Sometimes, this is associated with a rushed and flawed agreement; sometimes, failed agreements reflect the distractedness of the international community which may have moved on to the next conflict or is unable to maintain a coherent line of support. Reaching an agreement is only the first stage in a longer process: implementation also requires sustained assistance, both financial and political. The actions — and inaction — of other States can help reinforce a mediated solution or detract from its success.

11. Finally, greater cooperation and convergence in the Security Council would positively impact and support the mediation efforts of the United Nations and facilitate negotiated settlements.

12. Mediation nonetheless remains an essential, flexible and effective tool which is utilized for conflict prevention, management and resolution by the United Nations

[3] Uppsala Conflict Data Program dataset, as analysed in Sebastian von Einsiedel and others, *Civil War Trends and the Changing Nature of Armed Conflict*, United Nations University Centre for Policy Research Occasional Paper No. 10 (Tokyo, United Nations University, March 2017).

and a wide range of other organizations and actors. While we often speak of the required or optimal conditions for mediation, they are rarely to be found. I recognize that it is our responsibility to try to identify and seize upon any possible window of opportunity for mediation in order to prevent or manage violent conflict and, eventually, build and sustain peace. This report outlines some of the actions taken by the United Nations to support such mediation efforts and identifies how we intend to strengthen our ability to deepen work in this critical area.

III. Mediation and the surge in diplomacy for peace

13. The unacceptable levels of suffering caused by violent conflict demand a surge in diplomacy, a facet of which is strengthening mediation capacity in the broadest terms. Existing tools in the United Nations system provide a good basis upon which to build. Yet more needs to be done. It is my intention to bring together the capabilities of the diverse actors in the Organization across the peace and security, development and human rights pillars so as to maximize our assets in support of mediation.

14. Mediation requires consistent political engagement. This means close attention to developments at the local, national, regional and international levels. As Secretary-General, I shall offer my good offices, drawing on the capabilities of my special envoys and representatives and other senior advisers, and engage personally wherever I can to help prevent and manage conflict. To reinforce these efforts, I am establishing a High-level Advisory Board on Mediation to provide advice and distinct perspectives on conflicts and peace processes. I am enlarging the pool of high-level envoys and senior mediators, with a focus on women mediators, in line with my commitment to reach gender parity at the senior leadership level by 2021. I will also work to increase the availability of mediation and facilitation expertise to peace operations, particularly in peacekeeping settings.

15. The complex nature of today's conflicts underscores the importance of building relationships and strengthening partnerships. The United Nations Secretariat has made good progress in advancing strategic cooperation with regional organizations, most notably through the Joint United Nations-African Union — Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, signed on 19 April 2017. But we can do more to leverage our comparative advantages and to establish platforms for effective collaboration, including through our regional offices in West Africa and the Sahel, Central Africa and Central Asia and liaison offices such as the United Nations Office to the African Union. A critical test will be that of the ability to forge common positions and cooperative strategies in places such as Libya and the Central African Republic, based on increased exchanges not only at the Secretariat level but also between the Security Council and decision-making bodies in regional organizations. Our strategies for political engagement must draw on comprehensive and integrated conflict analysis, including attention to the political economy of conflict and its gender dimensions, as well as on expertise to be derived from the broader United Nations system and external partners.

16. We shall also increase our support to and partnership with national and local actors, including through the engagement of civil affairs officers in peace operations and peace and development advisers deployed through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UNDP-Department of Political Affairs Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention. In different circumstances, national and local actors can facilitate local-level dialogues, lay the groundwork for formal peace negotiations, address recurring conflicts over issues such as land and natural resources, and help minimize electoral violence.

Critically, they are also able to help generate buy-in and support for peace agreements, including among women, and other constituencies, notably youth, whose inclusion is essential to achieving a sustainable peace.

17. The United Nations system exerts the greatest impact when it enables others. This conviction is at the core of my approach to mediation and the initiative I have launched to reinforce the capabilities of the Organization so that we can be responsive to the needs of partners. The sections below outline how we are currently prepared to support mediation efforts, which for the purpose of this report are understood broadly to include mediation, facilitation and dialogue.

IV. United Nations activities in support of mediation

18. Mediation, together with mediation support, comes in many forms. At the United Nations, it is always offered on the basis of consent. In some processes, a United Nations representative is the lead mediator or facilitator; sometimes, there is a joint envoy arrangement with a regional organization; more frequently, however, the United Nations plays a supportive role in processes led by regional organizations, Member States or, occasionally, a non-governmental organization. The nature and extent of this support can vary enormously.

19. The mediation teams of the lead entity are set up differently according to the needs of the process. [4] Mediation support is a distinct function entailing reinforcement and assistance in facilitating the work of the team, as required, and can be provided through drawing on specific capacities within the Secretariat or the broader system, or on other partnerships.

20. The past 10 years have witnessed the emergence of a community of mediation support professionals. In 2006, the Mediation Support Unit was established within the Department of Political Affairs to provide targeted technical support to United Nations and other mediation processes. In 2011, the European Union established a mediation support team and was followed shortly thereafter by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Since then, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have each established mediation support offices within their secretariat structures, while the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Organization of American States (OAS) all have nascent mediation support capacities. Several other regional organizations have mediation focal points and some are contemplating the establishment of formal structures for mediation support within their secretariats. Similarly, some Member States have established specialized units within government structures to manage and support mediation and conflict resolution efforts. The United Nations Secretariat cooperates closely with these offices, including, when requested, through coaching and capacity-building on mediation and mediation support.

21. This report reflects on five broad elements of mediation support which can be mobilized at different times to facilitate a mediation process. These encompass

[4] The United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation (2012) encourages mediators to include within their team, expertise in the design of mediation processes, country/regional specialists and legal advisers, as well as communications, logistics, administrative and security support. It is also important to ensure that mediation teams include both women and men at all levels. Thematic experts may also be included, or deployed as required.

support for (a) an enabling environment; (b) design of a mediation strategy and process; (c) effective operations; (d) implementation; and (e) building capacities.

A. Enabling environment

22. Effective mediation requires a supportive external environment, especially as so many of today's conflicts have a strong regional and international dimension. Broad alignment behind a process and the incentives and disincentives of other actors can be instrumental in encouraging the commitment of conflict parties. However, this is frequently difficult to achieve given that, as noted above, in many settings the external environment may be one of the factors escalating or sustaining the conflict. Nonetheless, I am determined to offer my services and those of the United Nations to generate more enabling environments for conflict prevention and mediation. This will involve not only working with relevant regional and international actors to achieve alignment behind a political strategy, but also efforts to help foster broad societal support for peace processes.

23. When united, the Security Council has been able to affect processes positively, as in Yemen in 2011-2014. In some instances, visits by the Council have been critical in signalling political support for a mediation effort. The missions to South Sudan and Ethiopia in September 2016 aimed at encouraging parties to address the needs and aspirations of the people of South Sudan through the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. However, as noted, maintaining a clear course of action too often proves elusive, as developments in South Sudan sadly illustrate. Many factors influence the positions of the Council. Providing Member States with informed assessments and analysis on potential opportunities for engagement, as well as the implications of inaction, is a critical responsibility of the Secretariat.

24. On the ground, my special envoys and representatives also engage in efforts to generate a supportive political environment. In the Gambia, for example, my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel worked closely with the African Union and ECOWAS to resolve the 2017 electoral crisis through political messaging and visits conducted to demonstrate regional and international alignment. In South Sudan, my Special Representative for South Sudan and my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan are working with national, regional and international actors, including the African Union and IGAD, to build momentum for addressing the country's political cleavages and resuscitating the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my Special Envoy is working closely with national, regional and international partners in support of the political dialogue.

25. Political coordination may be institutionalized in the format of "friends", "contact groups" or "core groups". Some of these entities may be formed at the initiative of mediators, while others may be self-selecting or assembled by the conflict parties. In Guinea-Bissau, for instance, my Special Representative plays a central role in the coordination of the international community's support to the ECOWAS-led mediation. This coordination took place within the format of the so-called Guinea-Bissau P5 group, consisting of the African Union, ECOWAS, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, the European Union and the United Nations, which enabled the international community to speak with one voice.

26. Fostering public support requires the building of trust. In the Republic of Moldova, for example, UNDP and the United Nations family have supported the official settlement process by engaging in development interventions across the security zone on both sides of the Nistru/Dniestr River. These efforts facilitate

increased interaction and support the development of relations between the sides. Generating broad public support is often a challenging undertaking within a peace process, as illustrated by the case of Colombia, where the peace agreement reached between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army (FARC-EP) failed to win approval in a plebiscite held in October 2016. Communications campaigns and initiatives entailing outreach to civil society, local authorities and the public, which aim at the sharing of information on the agreements and underscoring the tangible benefits of peace, remain important in the implementation phase and can benefit from continued United Nations support.

B. Support for the mediation strategy and process

27. Getting the mediation process right can be as important as the substance of the talks. The agenda, sequencing of issues, composition of delegations and degree of inclusion are frequent subjects of dispute which would need to be confronted before parties engage in focusing on the substance of their grievances. In the absence of the will among the conflict parties to move forward, mediation teams may need to engage in "talks about talks" and shuttle diplomacy to prepare the ground. In addition to managing the dynamic between parties, they may need to manage dynamics within often fragmented or only loosely aligned groups, as well as concentric circles of regional and international interests. They will also need to assess how best to work with other mediation actors, including those from civil society, which may already be involved in a multiparty and multilayered process, and how to facilitate an approach that is inclusive of a wide array of other voices. Overall, mediation processes require a flexible, creative and adaptable strategy, which often encompasses an iterative process that evolves through many rounds of consultations.

28. Mediation support actors can assist in providing space for reflection and comparative experience on process design. For example, the Department of Political Affairs assisted the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria in brainstorming in-between rounds of talks in Geneva, including on their structure and design. It has supported similar exercises on behalf of my Special Envoy to Facilitate Dialogue in El Salvador and my Personal Representative on the border controversy between Guyana and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Facilitated by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Office of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, the Department of Political Affairs also supported the African Union-led national dialogue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on process design issues. Sometimes, process design support is needed for a highly specific dimension of a process. For example, the Department of Political Affairs provided support to the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in the Sudan in revising, together with the humanitarian actors, a humanitarian access negotiation strategy for the Two Areas of Blue Nile and South Kordofan States.

Thematic expertise

29. Confronted by what can be the maximalist positions of conflict parties, mediation teams seek to disentangle interests and needs with regard to a complex array of issues in order to help the parties agree on mutually acceptable arrangements. In high-pressured environments, they have to explore possible arrangements for stopping or reducing violence, while remaining attuned to their longer-term implications. A power-sharing agreement, for example, may have an impact on the space required to develop a workable constitution. Mediation support can assist by providing specific topical expertise. In addition to providing support

on process design for mediation and dialogue, the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs can deploy its experts to advise on issues including constitutions, transitional justice, inclusivity, gender, security arrangements and ceasefires, power-sharing, natural resources and reconciliation, so as to complement and reinforce the capacities of mediation teams.

30. Thematic expertise provided by the Mediation Support Unit has included advice to my Special Envoy for Yemen on the development of concepts centred on political transition and security arrangements and assistance to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the Gaalkacyo Ceasefire Team Advisory Group on the implementation strategy of a local ceasefire agreement. In Myanmar, the Unit supported the conceptualization of the United Nations platform of support for the Joint Monitoring Committee. Technical assistance includes expertise on gender. For instance, in support of efforts to advance inclusive transition processes, the Unit advised the Libyan constitution drafting assembly and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) on the drafting of gender-related provisions for inclusion in the constitution. The Department of Political Affairs also provides thematic advice to its partners, which has included, for example, advice on ceasefire management provided to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. As part of United Nations technical support provided to the IGAD-led mediation for South Sudan in 2015, the Mediation Support Unit advised my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan on justice, accountability and reconciliation issues, including on the specific language to be utilized in the agreement for addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

31. The United Nations Secretariat houses various specialized units which provide technical support to mediation processes. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions provides support on issues such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform, while its Office of Military Affairs advises on the implementation of ceasefires and security guarantees. For example, a permanent expert on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration was embedded within the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen to support the De-escalation and Coordination Committee. The Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs has supported the Syria process by providing technical papers on various aspects of the electoral process and engaging with opposition and government representatives on matters related to post-agreement balloting events, including elections, and by briefing civil society groups, particularly on the political participation of women in any future balloting activities. In 2012, the Mine Action Service of the United Nations (UNMAS) provided an outline for Colombian negotiators on the contamination problem and on how mine action could support both the peace process and socioeconomic development in the longer term. While the primary responsibility of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is to ensure effective humanitarian response, in specific contexts, such as the Mali peace talks in 2014 and the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in the Central African Republic in 2015, it has provided advice on humanitarian issues and language in mediation or peace processes.

32. Technical capacities relevant to mediation processes also exist within United Nations funds and programmes. In the Philippines, the United Nations Country Team, in cooperation with the World Bank, established a facility of advisory support for transition capacities to provide technical assistance to both sides in the lead-up to the final signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro in 2014. The mechanism continues to provide technical assistance to the joint bodies created for the implementation of the agreement. In Colombia, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-

General for Children and Armed Conflict provided technical support to parties in developing a protocol for the release of children from the ranks of FARC-EP.

33. Finally, technical advice may also be provided by partners. For instance, the Cypriot-owned and leader-led negotiations have been supported by expertise from the European Union under the auspices of the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus. This support has been focused on assisting in the preparations for the implementation of the European Union acquis within a future Turkish Cypriot constituent State, upon the entry into force of the settlement agreement. The World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund were also invited to provide expert technical assistance geared towards supporting the two communities in their efforts to achieve sustainable solutions to economic issues within a post-settlement Cyprus.

Inclusivity and local engagement

34. The fact that peace processes develop at different societal levels makes it imperative for the United Nations to connect with local initiatives. Addressing local-level grievances early on can avert their misappropriation for political purposes. More broadly, it is important that there be an expansion beyond the immediate conflict parties to engage those others — inter alia, civil society actors, including women, youth, religious groups and minorities — who can influence or have a stake in a peace process. Local consultations and dialogues can be linked with and brought into the formal process or they may be connected more informally, thereby broadening a sense of ownership, and thus helping to make agreements more sustainable.

35. Mediation teams can draw on the assistance of partners in convening and facilitating consultative processes which feed into activities at the peace table. In the Syrian process, for example, non-governmental organizations have assisted my Special Envoy in establishing and maintaining a women's advisory board and civil society support room to serve as a platform where Syrian civil society organizations can meet on the margins of the formal intra-Syrian negotiations. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and various international civil society partners have supported the United Nations mediation efforts in Yemen by conducting extensive dialogues with political and civil society leaders, women and youth groups so as to enable the testing of ideas and the building of understanding and acceptance within the context of potential areas for compromise. In Colombia, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights facilitated contacts between civil society and the parties. For example, the High Commissioner's representative in Colombia helped convey to the conflict parties the expectations of victims and their families with respect to justice, truth, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

36. Local-level dialogues and peace initiatives can provide a basis for and act as complements to a formal peace process. In support of national reconciliation efforts in Libya, UNSMIL and the Peacebuilding Fund are strengthening community reconciliation processes and assisting Libyan national and local authorities, civil society and other partners in formulating a road map for national-level reconciliation. A mediation expert on inclusive facilitation processes was deployed in Solomon Islands by the Department of Political Affairs to support the Government in addressing the underlying causes of the conflict through inclusive dialogue, with a particular focus on women's participation.

37. Civil affairs components of United Nations peacekeeping operations promote dialogue between communities in order to defuse tensions and create space for local peace agreements. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization

Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) supported dialogue initiatives in that country by engaging customary and religious leaders, local authorities and representatives of local civil society organizations. The African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) has organized peace forums and peace campaigns in that region to promote dialogue between nomadic communities and farmers as a means of confronting tensions that have regularly erupted in violent outbreaks and resulted in significant casualties and destruction, thereby putting a strain on the peace process.

38. The United Nations has also engaged in support of local mediation efforts led by our partners. In support of the SADC-led efforts towards facilitation in Lesotho, the United Nations Country Team, through the UNDP-Department of Political Affairs Joint Programme, assisted religious leaders in their work on facilitating dialogue among political actors. Mediators can draw on different mechanisms to ensure that voices of often marginalized communities are included in political processes. In Uganda, for example, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights conducted a study designed to explore perceptions of accountability, reconciliation and transitional justice among northern Ugandans as a contribution to the Juba peace talks 2006-2008. Unfortunately, those talks ultimately collapsed.

39. Non-governmental organizations can play a critical role as mediation support actors and they are often able to initiate and support quiet initiatives, including in conflict contexts where it may be difficult for United Nations actors to secure access. The Department of Political Affairs has been instrumental in establishing networks to better connect with non-governmental organizations and draw on their expertise as well as enhance collaboration among them. These include the Mediation Support Network which comprises primarily leading non-governmental organizations in the field of mediation; and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, designed to enable the creation of stronger links with the non-governmental organizations that work with those important national actors.

Women's participation

40. It is one of my priorities to ensure that women participate effectively in peace processes. This is critical not only for reaching just and sustainable solutions, but also for building inclusive and resilient societies. Inclusive mediation processes create multiple entry points and diverse mechanisms for women's participation. To strengthen United Nations capabilities in this respect, the Department of Political Affairs established a specialized unit in 2016 to elevate the integration of women, peace and security issues into the Department's work. The Gender, Peace and Security Unit, UN-Women and gender advisers in peace operations support and advise mediation processes, including on women's participation and gendered conflict analysis.

41. In March 2017, the Department of Political Affairs launched Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies, which provides mediators and their teams with practical advice on how to design gender-sensitive and inclusive processes. Examples of this kind of support include, in addition to the advice given to the women's advisory board in Syria, advice provided by the Secretariat in support of the efforts of UNSMIL to promote the inclusion of women in the implementation of the December 2015 Libyan Political Agreement. In Yemen, UN-Women has organized meetings within the context of the Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security which focus on developing collective priorities. This has included engagement in consultations aimed at encouraging new ways of thinking in preparation for the resumption of talks.

C. Effective operations

42. To be effective, mediation efforts require sophisticated and flexible operational, logistical, security, administrative and financial support. The ability to structure and organize multilevelled meetings, often at short notice, requires specialist support. Mediation teams may also need additional surge resources to manage the movement of delegations, breakout rooms, working groups and various other elements.

43. Different entities of the United Nations system can support mediation efforts by providing a venue or hosting negotiations. The United Nations Office at Geneva, for instance, plays a key role in operational facilitation of processes, including through hosting both discreet and high-visibility meetings and managing the complex arrangements that accompany such talks. United Nations peace operations and field offices offer smaller, local venues for engagement. For example, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) has provided a venue in that country for the dialogue process led by ECOWAS, and has regularly provided national stakeholders with transportation to enable them to hold mediation-related meetings outside the country. Within the context of the Geneva international discussions, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has provided a venue for the joint Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism in Gali town, chaired by my Representative to the Geneva international discussions. The selection of venue can be a sensitive matter and many of my special envoys and representatives rely on the support of Member States in assuming the financial, logistical, security and diplomatic responsibilities associated with offering conflict parties mutually acceptable venues for talks. I am grateful to Member States for this essential support to the United Nations and other mediation efforts.

44. United Nations peacekeeping operations, in addition to carrying out their mandates to support political processes, also provide logistical, administrative and security support to mediation efforts. The support provided by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for mediation and reconciliation efforts in that country includes provision of air travel and, when appropriate, security, to enable representatives of the Government and the National Assembly, as well as representatives of armed groups and religious and civil society actors, to attend meetings related to the peace process. To facilitate the Cypriot-owned and leader-led negotiations, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) provides logistical and security support to the meetings of the leaders, held inside the buffer zone, as well as administrative support to the Secretary-General's good offices mission through its Mission Support Component.

45. The fact that the dynamics and rhythm of mediation processes are in constant flux underscores the importance of the demonstration by the United Nations of flexibility and responsiveness with respect to the staffing and resource needs of mediation teams so as to maximize opportunities for constructive talks. To this end, additional staff capacities have been provided to support my special envoys in the Cyprus, Syria and Yemen talks at those critical moments when surge resources are required.

Funding

46. United Nations mediation efforts rely on several different mechanisms for funding. As mediation is a core mandate of the Department of Political Affairs, different capacities funded through the Department's regular budgets are dedicated

to mediation, both in regional divisions and in the Policy and Mediation Division. Mediation is also a critical component of the work of many special political missions, in particular the offices of special envoys of the Secretary-General (for example, for Syria and Yemen) and the three United Nations regional offices (the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)) as well as many country-based political missions (such as UNSMIL and UNSOM). Their work is funded through the regular budget provision for special political missions.

47. In recent years, however, given the limitations of the regular budget and increased demands, many mediation and conflict prevention efforts have been funded through extrabudgetary resources (voluntary contributions from Member States) obtained through the Department of Political Affairs annual funding appeal. These resources have played a critical role in allowing the Department to complement core capacities as well as the resources of special political missions, in response to the shorter-term or programmatic needs that arise in the course of a mediation process. Emergency windows have been established, including fast-track procedures, which facilitate access to funding in the particularly critical start-up phase. Resources have also been drawn from my unforeseen and extraordinary expenses account. The Peacebuilding Fund, established in 2005 and managed by the Peacebuilding Support Office, funds activities in support of countries emerging from conflict. In addition, the United Nations funds and programmes have resources that may be channelled to support mediation activities. Mediation is also an activity in peacekeeping operations; MINUSMA, for example, has a Mediation Unit which provides support to my Special Representative.

48. In Libya, UNDP administers extrabudgetary contributions from Member States which have financed some of the operational costs of the political dialogue process led by UNSMIL, as well as localized efforts during the Qanfoudah siege. In Guinea-Bissau, the support of the Peacebuilding Fund enabled UNIOGBIS to provide technical, logistical and financial assistance to ECOWAS delegations as well as for the organization of round-table consultations facilitated by ECOWAS mediators in Conakry. In the case of Yemen, Member States have provided funding support for my Special Envoy's efforts through a United Nations Office for Project Services-managed peace support fund. The funding has facilitated travel for Yemeni delegates to the talks, and the participation of key Yemeni civil society leaders in track-two consultations, as well for the inclusion of international and national experts in support of the process.

49. Member States have also provided valuable support by hosting donor conferences. Keeping the donor community informed regarding a peace process is important with regard to facilitating the coordination and alignment of external efforts, both to ensure essential financial support during the conflict (for example, in maintaining the functionality of key institutions) and to enable preparation for implementation. In the case of Yemen, the World Bank Group has managed regular virtual donor group coordination meetings which have allowed for briefings of the development community on the status of the political process and possible entry points. A World Bank adviser who was seconded to the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General helped build a bridge between political and development actors which contributed to the channelling of international development assistance resources in the amount of 819 million United States dollars to UNDP, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) so that community support and national capacities could be secured in the midst of the crisis.

D. Support to implementation

50. The implementation of peace agreements and settlements is highly dependent on external assistance. The United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation calls for the early involvement in the process of implementation support actors as well as donors to facilitate planning for implementation and help encourage compliance with the sometimes difficult concessions made during the negotiations. The implementation phase encompasses not only the immediate transition out of violence but also longer-term peacebuilding.

51. The period following the signing of an agreement requires sustained political support and good offices to ensure that trust is maintained between the signatories and that disputes arising from the challenges of implementation are resolved. In Guinea-Bissau, for example, UNIOGBIS has been working closely with political actors and civil society groups to provide political support for the implementation of the ECOWAS-brokered six-point road map and the Conakry Agreement. In Mali, my Special Representative has provided good offices to sustain the implementation of a fragile peace agreement.

52. The implementation of security arrangements often requires robust support. In many contexts, peacekeeping missions lead the verification and monitoring of ceasefires and security arrangements. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) chairs tripartite meetings, including the participation of senior officers from the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces, at which matters related to the cessation of hostilities and implementation of provisions of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) are discussed. Similarly, the United Nations Mission in Colombia is the coordinator of the tripartite Monitoring and Verification Mechanism which oversees the ceasefire and cessation-of-hostilities provisions in the final peace agreement. The Mission established a gender strategy for the communications component of the Mechanism, which highlights the role that women who work within the context of the monitoring and verification process play in the implementation of the peace agreement. The United Nations has particular capacities for supporting disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes in the implementation of peace agreements. For example, in Mali, MINUSMA provided disarmament, demobilization and reintegration expertise to the mediation team on the inclusion of provisions on security and defence in the 2015 peace agreement.

53. To assist the parties in addressing State fragility, peace agreements frequently include provisions on reforming or reinstating national and local authorities. In the Comoros, an agreement protocol was concluded in 2016 to enhance presidential and gubernatorial elections following the detection of shortcomings and irregularities in the early phases of the electoral process. The Department of Political Affairs Electoral Assistance Division supported the efforts of the national electoral institutions to ensure the implementation of the agreement during a required rerun on Anjouan Island, which contributed to the holding of peaceful and credible elections. In Mali, MINUSMA supports the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, for example, by helping to establish interim authorities in the regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu. In South Sudan, the World Bank Group supported the establishment of the Fiscal and Financial Allocation and Monitoring Commission, a joint body established under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to improve accountability and fairness in the allocation of nationally collected funds.

54. Broadening the sense of ownership and community investment in the implementation phase is an important contributing factor to a sustainable peace. In Mali, UN-Women has worked with the Ministry of Gender to bring together nearly

400 women from the Kidal region to discuss means of improving social cohesion in the region following the peace agreement. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the Peacebuilding Support Office have been supporting the establishment and functioning in that country of peace committees, hybrid structures designed to empower local leaders and communities to mediate, manage and settle conflict at the community level. In Colombia, over the past decade, and in anticipation of a peace agreement, UNDP built regional networks of over 700 civil society organizations in sectors impacted by the armed conflict. These networks, which include ethnic minorities, displaced populations, women and farmers' associations, have helped organize and empower civil society to contribute to subnational development and peacebuilding.

E. Capacity-building

55. The challenges confronted by mediation are fundamentally political in nature. However, strengthening the capacities of mediators, conflict parties and societies at large to engage in mediation processes enhances the chances of their success. Professionalizing the field of mediation and building institutional capacities through training and research, documenting practices and developing guidance, improve the organizational preparedness of the United Nations and its partners for maximization of opportunities for effective mediation.

Training as mediation support

56. Training on the technical aspects of mediation is one means of helping conflict parties and mediation teams to overcome deadlocks or inject creativity into a negotiation process, as this can create a less politicized environment for exchanges between them. The annual United Nations Ceasefire Mediation and Management Course, a collaborative initiative undertaken with the Governments of Norway and Switzerland, trains conflict parties alongside United Nations staff. Recent courses have included actors from Afghanistan, Colombia, Libya, the Philippines, Myanmar and South Sudan. In support of the work of the De-escalation and Coordination Committee formed under the cessation-of-hostilities agreement in Yemen, the Office of my Special Envoy organized a planning workshop for representatives of the Government of Yemen and the General People's Congress-Houthi to strengthen their capacity to plan and support the cessation of hostilities. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), with the support of the Department of Political Affairs, has provided training in that country on negotiation techniques to the High Peace Council mandated to oversee the peace process. Such support can also be provided to Member State-facilitated processes. For instance, the Mediation Support Unit provided training to the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and the Government of the Philippines on ceasefire negotiation, implementation and management, in support of the efforts of the Government of Norway.

57. Another function of mediation training is to strengthen the capacities of civil society to participate in, support and facilitate dialogue and mediation, including as related to prevention. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) trained and enabled female members of the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation in that country to contribute to local and national reconciliation processes. In the Great Lakes region, MONUSCO and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region supported the training of youth on mediation within the framework of the annual Goma Youth Forum, which brings together over 20,000 youth from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. In the Central Africa Republic,

UN-Women partnered with a regional non-governmental organization in training 100 women on inter-community conflict mitigation.

Professionalizing the field of mediation

58. I am prioritizing the strengthening of United Nations mediation capacities, building on efforts of the Department of Political Affairs to professionalize the United Nations approach to mediation and to provide support to partners. Broad recognition of the need to further professionalize the practice of mediation is illustrated by the growing number of mediation support entities.

59. The Department of Political Affairs offers training courses on mediation designed to strengthen the capacities of United Nations staff to support and manage mediation processes, which regularly include representatives of regional organizations and Member States. They range from a mandatory training course on gender, peace and security and an annual mid-level training course on mediation and facilitation skills training, conducted in cooperation with the Government of Sweden, to a high-level mediation course, conducted in partnership with the Government of Switzerland, for my special envoys and special representatives as well as the future generation of envoys. In addition, the Department organizes a range of specialized training programmes, for example, on religion and mediation, in partnership with the Governments of Finland and Switzerland, as well as tailored mediation training courses upon request. In Cyprus, for example, the Department provided training to UNFICYP uniformed personnel and civilian staff on conflict resolution skills and techniques. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research also offers a distinct mediation course as well as an online course in the public domain.

60. All peace processes are highly contextual; however, drawing lessons from past experience and investing in the institutional memory of the Organization are critical to our efforts to enhance capacity. The Department of Political Affairs maintains a repository of knowledge products and hosts a public website, UN Peacemaker, which enables access to reference materials. In December 2016, the Department launched the Language of Peace database, created in partnership with the Legal Tools for Peace-Making Project of the University of Cambridge, to facilitate the search for peace agreement provisions by themes. In addition to issuing the United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation and Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies, the Department has published various mediation guidance notes, such as the Mediation Start-up Guidelines (2011); Guidance for Mediators: Addressing Conflict-related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements (2012); and Natural Resources and Conflict: A Guide for Mediation Practitioners (2015). The Department also responds regularly to requests from the field for specific analysis and options papers. In addition, UNDP, in cooperation with the European Union and the Department of Political Affairs, has published a guidance note entitled "Supporting Insider Mediation: Strengthening Resilience to Conflict and Turbulence" (2014).

Enhancing capacities of regional partners

61. I have stressed that the United Nations is most effective in its role as an enabler, and wish to emphasize the importance of greater investment in partnerships. In recent years, the United Nations has increased its support to regional and subregional organizations that are seeking to strengthen their mediation capacities, for example, by advising on the establishment of specialized mediation support structures and mechanisms. The Department of Political Affairs, through its regional office in West Africa and liaison office to the African Union, has worked closely with the African Union and ECOWAS in establishing their in-house

mediation support units. The Mediation Support Unit has hosted staff from various regional organizations to exchange lessons and experiences on mediation support structures, including staff from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the League of Arab States, the Organization of American States, OIC, OSCE and ECOWAS. The Department has also provided technical support to the African Union and IGAD on designing and operating expert mediation rosters, and has collaborated with South Africa in providing mediation and negotiations skills training to a group of female diplomats predominately from SADC.

62. Training is also a useful means of helping to address specific regional challenges and develop collaboration. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, for example, is focusing on strengthening the mediation capacity of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), including through the training, in April 2017, of ECCAS secretariat and field staff involved in the subregional organization's mediation and preventive diplomacy efforts. The Department of Political Affairs has also facilitated exchanges of experiences between regional organizations in mediation support. In cooperation with the European Union, the Mediation Support Unit co-hosted a technical experts retreat with mediation support offices of the African Union, ECOWAS, IGAD, OIC and OSCE in Rome in 2016.

Enhancing national capacities in mediation and dialogue

63. Enhancing national and local mediation capacities is one of the priorities of my mediation initiative. I am encouraged by the number of Member States that have recently established dedicated capacities to support and coordinate mediation efforts. Several Member States have also established networks of local mediators and infrastructures of peace to serve as standing prevention and conflict resolution capacities and to promote a culture of mediation and dialogue within their communities. Member States and regional organizations have also established networks of women mediators in several regions, both to address local conflicts and to provide support to international peacemaking efforts. The establishment of the Southern African Women Mediators network, was followed by that of the Nordic Women Mediators Network and the African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation. The aim of these networks is to mentor and enable female mediation professionals and experts in respect of their peacemaking efforts.

64. Strengthening the capacities of national and local mediators through mentoring, coaching and training programmes constitutes an investment in conflict prevention. The Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Peacebuilding Support Office and UNDP, often through engagement with Peace and Development Advisers, all conduct ongoing activities in this area. For example, in Guyana, the Guyanese for Peace initiative, facilitated by the Peace and Development Adviser, supported a peaceful process during the 2015 elections by encouraging dialogue and consensus building. In Uganda, UN-Women provided support to civil society groups for the establishment of a women's situation room which strove to mitigate election-related violence before, during and after the 2016 presidential election.

65. It is important to carry out more focused and coordinated action within the framework of these endeavours and to draw upon the capacities of the varied constituencies within communities, including women and youth. Local and national actors bring specific insights, cultural sensitivity, knowledge and contacts which are not always accessible to outsiders. Partnerships need to be generated with Member States and regional organizations as well as civil society organizations so as to empower these actors and build resilience at the local and national levels.

V. Conclusions

66. This report underlines the importance of mediation and mediation support for the broader goal of conflict prevention, one of the essential challenges of our time. The United Nations supports mediation and facilitation efforts which entails drawing upon its convening power and its capacities and partnerships across and beyond the system. I encourage my envoys and special representatives, as well as our partners, to make use early on of mediation support. I will do the same in my good offices role, as I firmly believe that by deploying the full range of tools available to us we enable more effective conflict prevention and peacemaking.

67. Despite the challenges we face at the global level, I am pleased to observe that we are increasingly aligning our activities in support of Member States, regional partners and other actors in their efforts to prevent and peacefully resolve political crises and violent conflicts. My strategy for mediation involves strengthening United Nations capacity and ensuring that the Organization maximizes its assets in support of mediation across the peace and security, development and human rights pillars. I believe strongly that the United Nations can do a better job if it acts in an integrated manner and with predictable funding supported by the membership at large.

68. Much more needs to be done to prevent and resolve conflicts and build resilient societies which can deliver on the pledge to leave no one behind — a pledge that underpins the Sustainable Development Goals. Together, we must recommit to our responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. I appeal to the Security Council and to all Member States to use their influence to send a strong and unwavering signal in support of efforts to end the burning conflicts which are eroding our capacity to pursue development. As I do so, I wish to thank in particular the Group of Friends of Mediation, which has played an important role in maintaining a spotlight on the critical tool of mediation. We must be similarly united in identifying and responding promptly to early signs of tension and potential conflict, while using all the means available to us to prevent and forestall violence.

69. We cannot and must not lose sight of the formal mediation processes that seek to resolve the most pressing conflicts of our time. However, if we are to combine these efforts with engagement at the local and community levels, we need to improve our ability to harness and align a full range of mediation and dialogue tools. This means drawing on different strengths within the system and working with partners in the international community and at all levels of the societies concerned. I believe that we have the necessary expertise, creativity and drive to meet this challenge. The need to do so is resoundingly clear.

United Nations A/72/116

General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 June 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Item 139 of the preliminary list*
Pattern of conferences

Pattern of conferences

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains information on procedures and activities relating to the pattern of conferences in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 71/262 and other relevant mandates. The report begins with a brief overview, which is followed by sections presenting the results and developments recorded in meetings management and documents management in 2016, together with cost-efficiency initiatives and cross-cutting issues. It ends with a set of conclusions, recommendations and proposed next steps. Information is summarized to the extent possible in order to keep the report succinct and within the word limit. Electronic versions of the documents of the Committee on Conferences are available from https://coc.dgacm.org.

* A/72/50.

17-10685 (E) 190717

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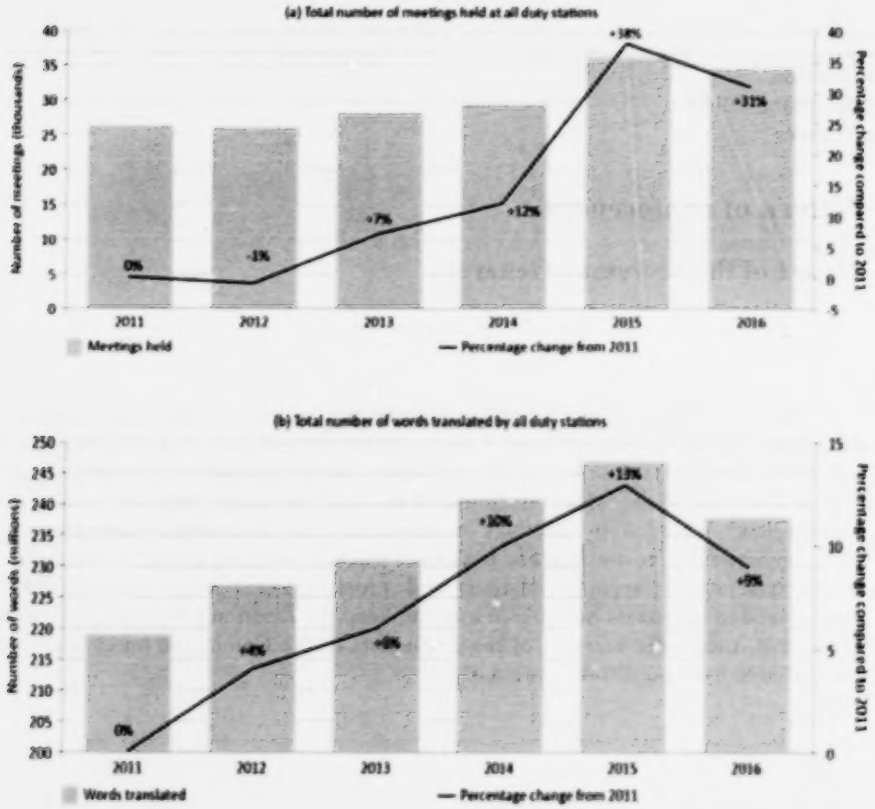
I. Introduction

1. The expansion of the role of the United Nations as a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of their common goals has been accompanied by a correlated increase in the meetings and documentation workload of the Secretariat.

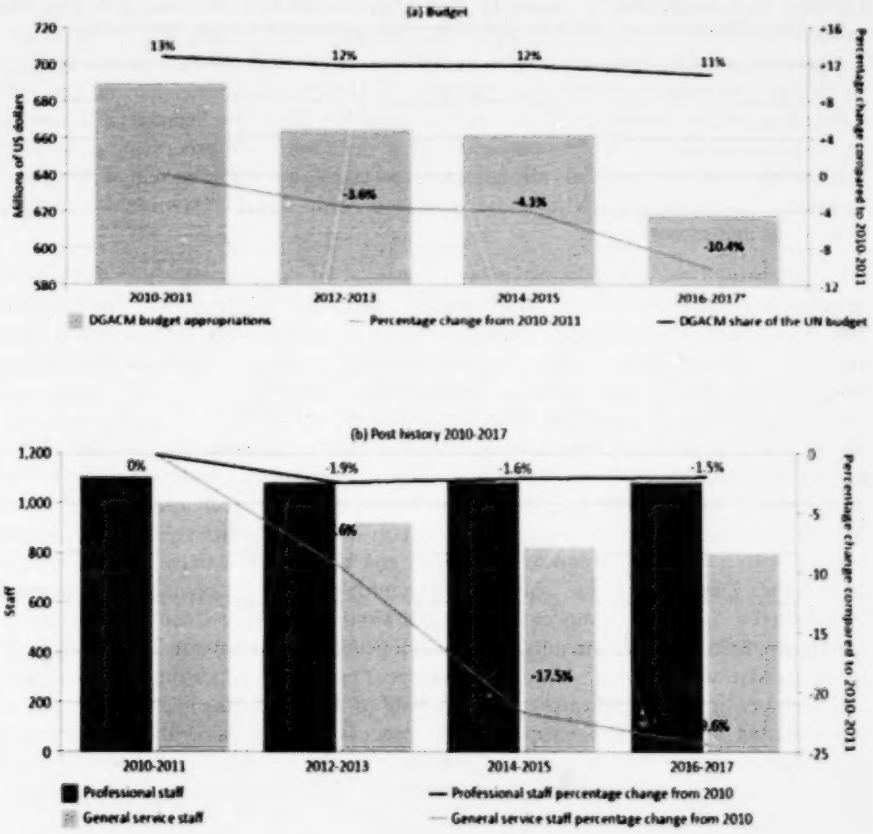
Figure I
Number of meetings held and words translated, 2011-2016



2. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management serviced almost 35,000 meetings and translated 246 million words in 2016, numbers that remain practically unchanged from 2015 and represent a 31 per cent and 9 per cent increase, respectively, from 2011 (see fig. I).[1] In spite of the workload increase, there has been a constant reduction, since 2011, in the Department's biennial budget appropriations, including through the reduction of 59 posts since 2010-2011 (see fig. II). This has presented the Secretariat's conference-management operations at Headquarters and in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi with sizeable challenges, which it has been able to meet through various measures, described below.

[1] See para. 11 below, explaining the choice of 2011 as the base year.

Figure II
Departmental budget and posts, bienniums 2010-2011 to 2016-2017



3. The Secretariat has responded and will continue to respond to these challenges and make every effort to absorb the increasing workload by seeking ways to increase the productivity and efficiency of its conference services at all four duty stations through a strategy of continuous improvement and modernization. This strategy is already bearing fruit. In 2016, the Secretariat managed to maintain or improve its overall performance in key areas.

4. The strategy is based on strengthening advance planning, leveraging technology, optimizing language capacity, streamlining workflows and harmonizing systems to achieve further efficiency gains while maintaining high quality. In this way, the Secretariat will continue its efforts to provide high-quality services at all four duty stations at the same or lower cost and within the mandated time frames, to the extent possible, notwithstanding reduced resources.

5. Key components include the mainstreaming of information technology solutions in all aspects of conference management, concerted efforts to replenish, rejuvenate and motivate the workforce, and the modernization of working methods and procedures. In 2016, this has involved further developing in-house customized information technology tools and their implementation in all four duty stations; restructuring language support functions, adjusting working methods and updating standard operating procedures to reflect the new, fully electronic workflow; expanding

the pools of qualified freelance translators and developing quality control protocols to increase external processing capacity and ensure quality; harmonizing the systems and procedures used at all duty stations in order to increase the potential for workload sharing; and standardizing reporting templates to improve the comparability and usefulness of data for monitoring and evaluation and hence for ongoing improvement. Several innovations were also piloted in 2016, in recruitment testing, the management of contractual translation and the utilization of internal capacity. Also, in line with General Assembly resolution 71/262 of 23 December 2016, the Secretariat is seeking to rebalance its internal professional capacity in documentation processing to improve efficiencies and ensure that all language services are afforded equal treatment according to their specificities and provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources.

6. These and the other improvements outlined in the present report reflect the Secretariat's commitment to fulfilling its mandate for ensuring the quality, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, sustainability and accessibility of the conference services it provides in a budget-constrained and -tightening environment. Future progress will require the further mainstreaming of best practices and harmonized operating procedures across the four duty stations, which has been under way since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/283, including the full integration of the automation tools used by the language services. Following an earlier alignment of policies and information and communications technology systems, all duty stations have actively engaged in the current comprehensive round of deeper harmonization and integration of operations and business practices. To that end, in 2015, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management established a Steering Group chaired by the Under-Secretary-General. The Group, acting in three parallel streams, has developed and promulgated more than 70 recommendations aimed at harmonizing business processes, reporting methodologies and key performance indicators. Almost half of the recommendations have been implemented already. The harmonization process will enhance the delivery and effectiveness of the policy guidance provided by the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management to all duty stations, in accordance with Assembly resolution 57/283, sect. II.B, para. 7.

II. Meetings management

A. Draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2018-2019

7. At its substantive session, in September 2017, the Committee on Conferences will review the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2018-2019 (A/AC.172/2017/L.2) and transmit its recommendations to the General Assembly in its report for 2017 (to be issued as A/72/32, annexes I and II).

B. Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

8. Requests to meet during the main part of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly have been received from six bodies. In accordance with established practice, the requests will be reviewed by the Committee on Conferences, which will make a recommendation to the Assembly.

C. Intersessional departures

9. The Committee on Conferences approved eight requests for intersessional departures.

D. Utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities by United Nations organs

1. Utilization of conference-servicing resources by all calendar bodies

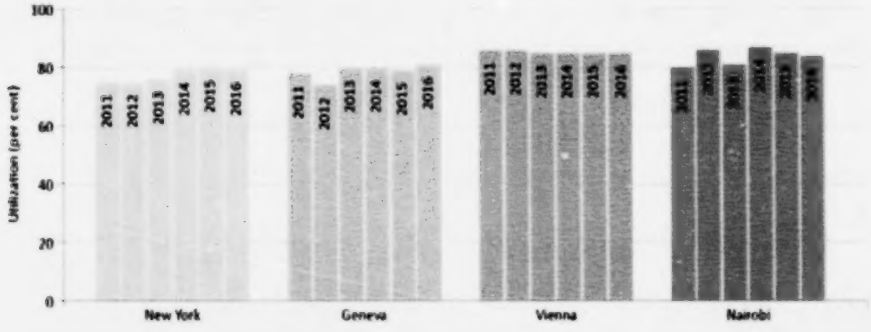
10. The total number of meetings held at the four duty stations in 2016 decreased by 5 per cent compared with 2015, from 36,316 to 34,604. The 2015 figure reflects an exceptional spike in the volume of meetings, generated by the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, the events held that year to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/268, which added 20.6 weeks of meetings of the human rights treaty bodies per year, and a very intense programme of meetings on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in preparation for the signing of the Paris Agreement in November 2015.

11. To provide a full picture of the utilization of conference-servicing resources, the present report continues to use the methodology developed in 2015 that broadens the scope of reporting beyond the core sample to report on the formal meetings of all calendar bodies at all four duty stations using a six-year cycle (see fig. III). This methodology also makes it possible to address underutilization more broadly and to achieve greater efficiencies across all intergovernmental bodies.

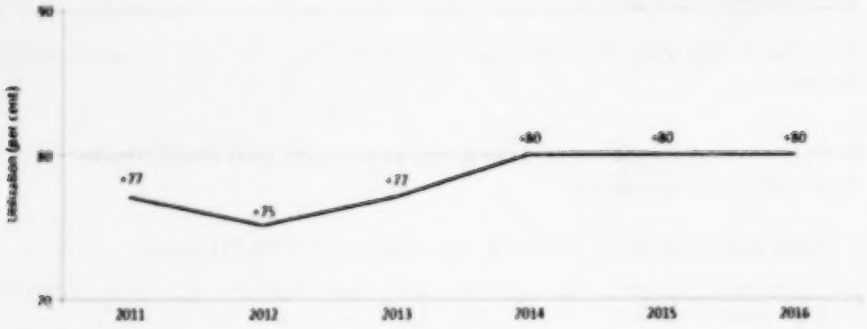
12. The overall utilization of allocated meeting services in 2016 was 80 per cent, as in 2015. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management continued to work closely with the secretariats of calendar bodies on refining their programmes of work and adjusting their interpretation requirements, in order to minimize the number of cancellations and number of minutes lost as a result of the late start or early ending of meetings, the two main factors affecting service utilization.

Figure III
Utilization of conference-servicing resources, 2011-2016

(a) By duty station



(b) Globally



2. Intergovernmental bodies for which the utilization of meeting services was below 80 per cent

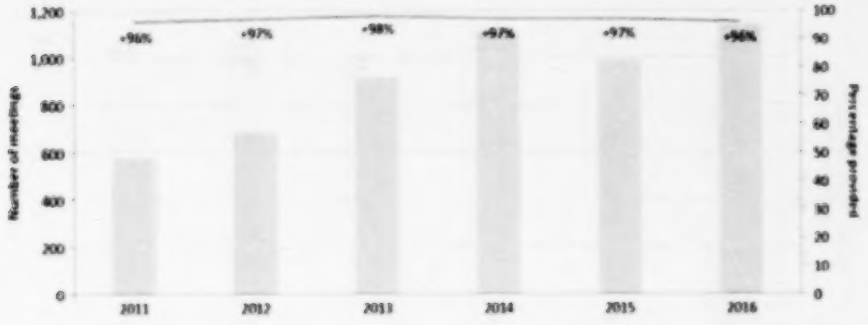
13. Pursuant to paragraph 14 of General Assembly resolution 71/262, the Chair of the Committee on Conferences sent letters in June 2017 to the presiding officers of each of the 14 calendar bodies that have consistently utilized less than 80 per cent of their allocated meeting services for each of the past six years, drawing their attention to the issue. The letters contained tailored recommendations for achieving the optimum utilization of meeting services and for employing additional measures to make their use of conference services more efficient. The letters were followed up with further practical support from the Secretariat.

14. With the inclusion of bodies outside the core sample in the analysis, the number of bodies whose average utilization of meeting services has been below the benchmark of 80 per cent for the past six years has increased substantially, to 42 (of those, 20 are based in New York, 19 in Geneva and 3 in Vienna).

3. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required"

15. As shown in figure IV, in New York, the number of requests for interpretation and the number of meetings provided with interpretation have both doubled since 2011, increasing by 15 per cent and 13 per cent, respectively in 2016, compared with 2015. All requests for meeting rooms were met, and all but a fraction of the requests for interpretation services were fulfilled. In Geneva, the only body entitled to meet "as required" is the Human Rights Council, and all its requests were met. There are no bodies in Vienna or Nairobi that are entitled to meet "as required".

Figure IV
Provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required" in New York, 2011-2016



E. Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

16. Figure V shows the provision of interpretation services to regional and other major groupings of Member States at the four duty stations from 2011 to 2016. In 2016, all requests for meeting rooms were met. It must be emphasized that regional and other major groupings of Member States are provided with interpretation on an "if available" basis only, by using services released from cancelled meetings or when excess capacity is available. Consequently, the provision of interpretation to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States is inversely proportional to provision of interpretation calendar meetings and to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required".

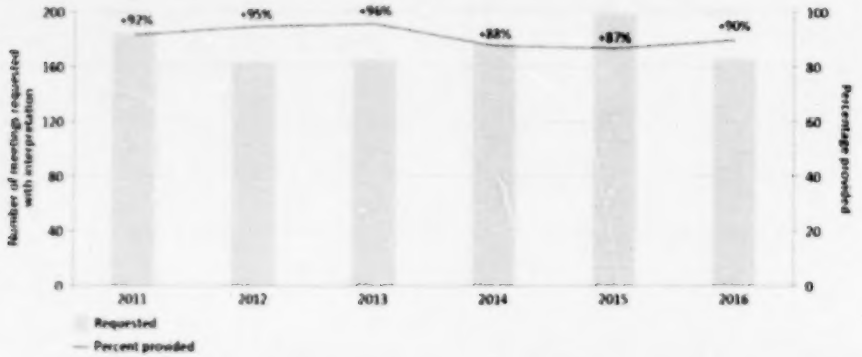
17. New York registered a 17 per cent decrease in the number of requests for interpretation and 14 per cent decrease in the number of meetings provided with interpretation in 2016, the latter owing to the increased needs of "as required" bodies. Geneva, for its part, experienced an increase of 4 per cent in the number of requests for interpretation, mostly in preparation for the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Fewer requests were accommodated, however, due to the increased number of calendar meetings mandated by the General Assembly.

18. Vienna received no requests, while in Nairobi all of the 11 requests for interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States were met.

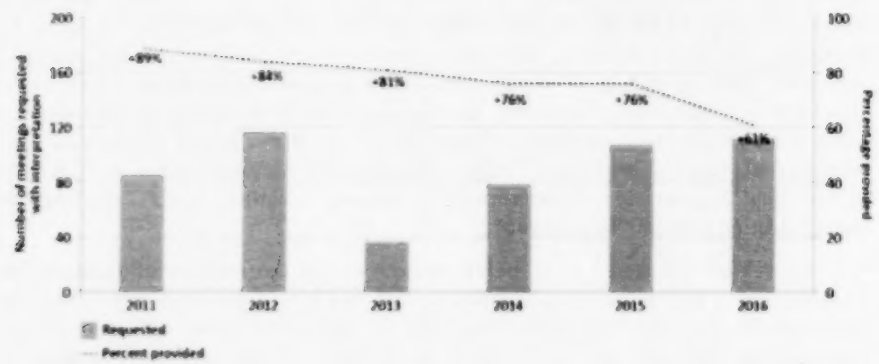
Figure V

Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States in New York and Geneva, 2011-2016

(a) New York



(b) Geneva



F. Utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

19. In 2016, in accordance with several resolutions of the General Assembly, including paragraph 23 of resolution 70/9, all meetings of Nairobi-based bodies were held in Nairobi, in conformity with the headquarters rule.

G. Utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa

20. Thanks to sustained marketing efforts that strategically target local organizations (primarily United Nations agencies, international organizations, government entities, embassies, private and public bodies and key hospitality industry representatives based in Addis Ababa) and regional and international clients, the average occupancy of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa increased to 93 per cent in 2016 from 84 per cent in 2014 and 2015. This marked a significant reversal of a previous trend of underutilization, in which levels had reached as low as 53 per cent in 2011.

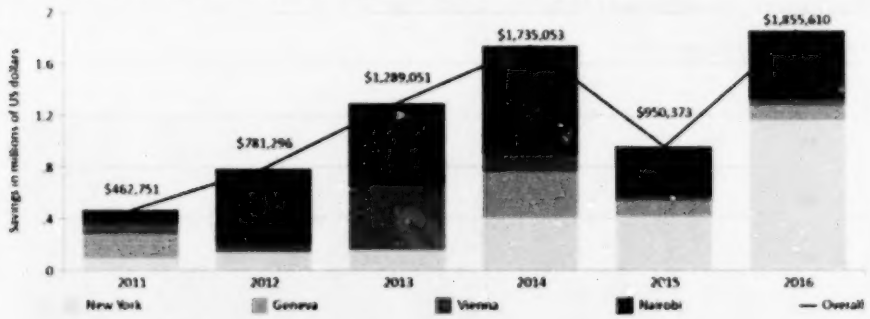
H. Meetings held away from established headquarters

21. All duty stations applied the integrated global management rule where appropriate. Continued efforts were made to build up capacity for coordinating and servicing such meetings in the most efficient way through the expansion of the pool of trained staff members. In the process of assembling a servicing team, consideration was given not only to proximity, but also to the quality of services, hidden administrative costs, replacement costs and expertise.

22. In 2016, the application of the integrated global management rule resulted in notional savings of $1,855,610 for both regular budget and extrabudgetary activities (see fig. VI), considerably more than in 2015, mainly as a result of the higher number of conferences held away from established headquarters in 2016 (35) than in 2015 (27). These notional savings were accrued to host countries or other international or regional organizations that requested assistance from the United Nations. It should be noted that the additional workload of coordinating and servicing such meetings is usually not reflected as additional costs to the United Nations.

Figure VI

Notional savings from the application of the integrated global management rule in servicing meetings away from established headquarters



I. Summary records, verbatim records and digital recordings

23. The number of verbatim records produced by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management remained relatively high, at 435, compared with 439 in 2015 and 438 in 2014. While the number of meetings entitled to verbatim records remained relatively stable, their length increased together with the number of words to be recorded in the verbatim records. The number of summary records produced in New York was 328 in 2016, compared with 419 in 2015 and 315 in 2014. In Geneva, the increase in meetings entitled to summary records drove up the number of such records produced there from 499 in 2014, to 580 in 2015 and 622 in 2016.

24. Digital recordings are available to any meeting body at its request. Three Vienna-based bodies entitled to written records used digital recordings in 2016, and two of them decided to discontinue the production of written records. There were more than 6,800 downloads from the system in 2016, compared with slightly more than 5,000 in 2015.

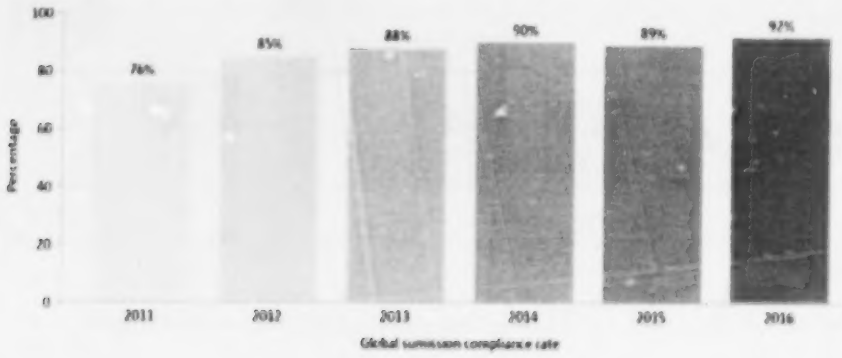
III. Documents management

A. Timely submission, processing and issuance of documents

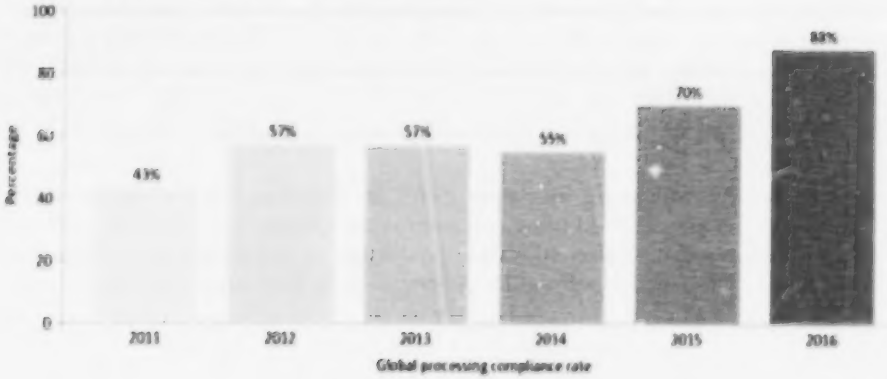
25. Globally, all key performance indicators of documents management were considerably improved in 2016, as shown in figure VII. The definitions and templates for statistical reporting on document submission, processing and issuance compliance were harmonized across all duty stations to expedite monitoring and the early identification of areas for improvement. In comparison with previous years, submission compliance — that is, compliance by author departments with the deadlines for submitting slotted documents for processing (editing, translation and formatting) — increased in 2016 by 16 per cent compared with 2011. Processing compliance — that is, compliance by the Secretariat with the four-week processing deadlines for documents that are submitted on time and within word limits — increased significantly, to 88 per cent, up from 70 per cent in 2015 and 43 per cent in 2011, and issuance compliance — that is, compliance with mandated issuance deadlines of six weeks (or four weeks in the case of several United Nations organs, funds and programmes) before the documents are scheduled for consideration — also increased significantly, to 79 per cent, from 67 per cent in 2015 and 44 per cent in 2011.

Figure VII
Documents management indicators, 2011-2016

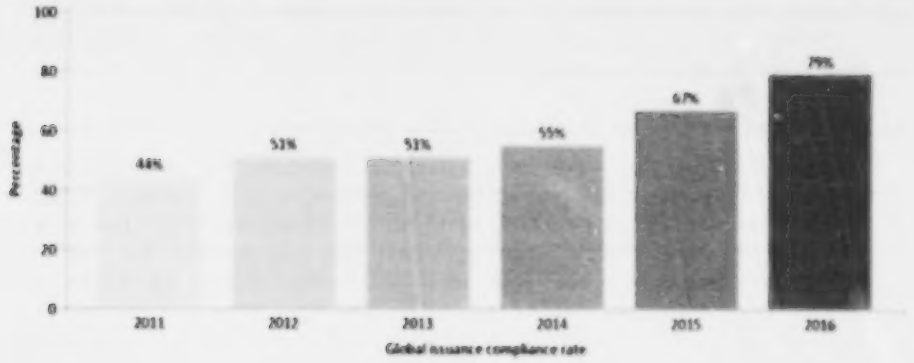
(a) Timely submission



(b) Timely processing of slotted documents



(c) Timely issuance of slotted documents



26. It should be noted that the submission compliance rates shown in figure VI refer to submission by an agreed slot date, not necessarily submission in accordance with the mandated deadlines of 10 or 8 weeks before consideration. Globally, in 2016, only 79 per cent of documents were submitted to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management for processing in accordance with the mandated time frames, marking a decrease of 4 per cent from 2015. The improvement of 12 per cent in timely issuance in 2016 was achieved thanks to conference management staff working closely with all author departments and to the language services meeting more processing deadlines or even reducing turnaround time.

27. As in previous years, external factors beyond the control of author departments prevented some documents from being submitted for processing within the mandated time frames. This was particularly true for documents prepared for consideration by the Fifth Committee. To address the perennial challenges posed by Fifth Committee documentation, the Secretariat continued its efforts for the third year in a row to ensure close collaboration between the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the author departments and the secretariats of the Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. As a result of these efforts and the extraordinary work of the language services, 69 of the 104 reports slotted for the main session of the Fifth Committee in 2016 were issued six weeks before consideration. This was achieved even though only 32 reports had been received 10 weeks before consideration and th. average length of reports amounted to nearly 19,000 words. Since the adoption of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, the workload related to the reports of the Board of Auditors has increased drastically over the past three years: by 13 per cent in 2015 and 46 per cent in 2016 compared to the first annual reporting cycle in 2014.

1. Challenges in the processing of high-priority non-slotted documents

28. The dynamic nature of the intergovernmental process generates a considerable number of unplanned, high-priority documents for processing, which has a heavy impact on the Secretariat's capacity to meet deadlines. In New York, for example, the volume of the unplanned workload in 2016 continued to exceed 50 per cent of the total workload (56 per cent in 2016, up from 55 per cent in 2015 and 51 per cent in 2014).

29. In this respect, the processing of reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions posed a particular challenge at

Headquarters. During the main part of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management received 42 reports from the Advisory Committee, totalling 185,387 words, which it succeeded in processing in an average of three calendar days and issuing at least 24 hours prior to their consideration.

2. Waivers of word limits

30. In New York, the proportion of Secretariat documents that exceeded the word limits was 26 per cent in 2016, up from 18 per cent in 2015, adding 1.78 million words to the workload. Meanwhile, the 15 per cent of non-Secretariat documents in that category represented a further additional 1.18 million words for processing. Author departments have been encouraged to consider reducing the volume of the reports they generate by seeking alternative means to share information. At the United Nations Office at Geneva, on the other hand, all slotted pre-session documents have been submitted in full compliance with the word limits since 2012, and waivers were granted in 2016 for only 10 reports of the Joint Inspection Unit. At the United Nations Office at Vienna, with the exception of legal documents that are not subject to a word limit, nearly full compliance was achieved. At the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the compliance rate was 88 per cent, with only three documents exceeding the word limits.

B. Simultaneous distribution of documents

31. Simultaneous distribution of documents is one of the pillars of multilingualism that the Department makes every effort to achieve without exception. In 2016, a new reporting template and definitions were introduced for compiling simultaneous distribution statistics that will facilitate the monitoring of this indicator. The simultaneous distribution compliance rate in 2016 was 99 per cent in New York and Nairobi and 100 per cent in Vienna. Strict enforcement of the mandate and accelerated processing increased simultaneous distribution in Geneva from 50 per cent in 2011 to 80 per cent in 2016. Instructions from intergovernmental bodies and author departments that some language versions should be issued before the others were ready, as was the case with a number of Human Rights Council documents, account largely for the incidence of non-simultaneous distribution.

C. Digitization and uploading of important older United Nations documents

32. As of February 2017, 409,556 documents have been digitized, catalogued and made available, representing some 13.7 per cent of the 3 million documents identified as important and in urgent need of digitization, up from 12.8 per cent in April 2016.

D. Innovation in documents processing in 2016

33. The use of the in-house designed computer-assisted translation tool, eLUNa, increased at all duty stations and across all language combinations by 65 per cent in 2016. At the end of the year, the tool was being used by approximately 1,200 internal, temporary and contractual translators and verbatim reporters, who all enjoyed access to the same document repository and terminology database. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia adopted eLUNa in 2016, and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has requested to do

the same in 2017. Feedback from this large pool of users is channelled into ongoing improvements, which in 2016 included the integration of a powerful tool for making advanced, customized searches in the global document repository. In addition, a new interface for editors was developed for deployment in mid-2017. Like the translation interface, the editing interface automatically verifies the use of the official terminology contained in the UNTERM terminology portal and identifies which parts of a document are recycled from previously issued documents. This will allow editors to process documents more efficiently and focus on improving the quality and readability of the originals.

34. The wealth of information that eLUNa places at its users' fingertips helps to not only ensure quality and consistency, but also reduce document processing time, since most reference searches are automated. The strategy pursued by the Department in this area envisions a gradual phasing out of a reference-by-default mode of operation and its replacement by automated reference and on-demand reference with quality assurance based on the document categorization. Thanks to such automation, several unencumbered reference assistant posts in the Documentation Division were abolished in the budget for 2018-2019, while all encumbered posts were reassigned to new language support functions with high added value, such as editorial support, optical character recognition, transliteration of proper names in Arabic, Chinese and Russian, and on-demand research services. In Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, the reprofiling will have to be implemented in a phased manner, largely owing to the numbers of encumbered posts in the reference units, as well as the need to review the categorization of the documents.

1. Consolidation of UNTERM as the global United Nations terminology portal

35. Access to official terminology records is key for the quality, consistency and efficiency of the work of the United Nations languages services. In 2016, UNTERM was brought under the umbrella of the gText project and incorporated in the eConference portal, where it is fully integrated into the automated referencing function of eLUNa. Work to migrate terminology from all the duty stations and regional commissions into UNTERM continued, with the ultimate goal of achieving global harmonization. Geneva's terminology database was migrated in 2015. Work to migrate Vienna's terminology began in 2016 and is expected to be completed in 2017, together with the migration of the databases of Nairobi, Beirut and Santiago. The redeployment of terminologists and terminology assistants to the language services in New York in 2015 has yielded excellent results in terms of aligning terminology production with users' needs, accelerating record creation and improving the quality of terminology records. UNTERM is quickly asserting itself as the primary source for United Nations terminology referencing for both staff and the general public, with over 4 million human searches logged in 2016, an increase of 37 per cent compared with 2015.

2. Optimization of contractual translation management

36. The previous model of contractual translation management in New York made it difficult to align contracting decisions with in-house capacity and the particular expertise required. A system whereby the individual translation services assign contractual work into their language was piloted in two services at the end of 2016. The pilot revealed two main gains: an improved utilization of existing internal capacity and improved quality assurance. In the Arabic Translation Service, jobs that would have been contracted out were processed in-house. In the Chinese Translation Service, jobs were assigned to more qualified contractors, with particular attention paid to their mastery of the required subject matter, which is a prerequisite for quality. Given the success of this pilot, the operations of the

Contractual Translation Unit in New York will be integrated into the individual translation services and the Executive Office. To increase harmonization and the potential for workload sharing, common quality control standards for external translation work were adopted by all four duty stations. A quality control module for contractual editing was also incorporated into the contractual management application.

IV. Workload and staffing

A. Productivity, workload of revisers and workload sharing

1. Productivity

37. Table 1 shows the productivity, in terms of output in words per day per staff member, in the translation services at all four duty stations. The productivity of the translation services has generally increased, especially in the past two years, thanks to the introduction of new working methods and technologies. The figures in table 1 represent the effort of individual staff members and do not fully reflect the efficiency gains achieved through the use of eLUNa and increased self-revision. The Secretariat intends to review the productivity measurement methodology so that it reflects both individual effort and the efficiency gains generated by the use of technologies, including computer-assisted translation.

Table 1
Translation productivity, 2011-2016

(Words per staff member per day)

Duty station	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*
New York	1 530	1 596	1 506	1 656	1 819
Geneva	1 566	1 533	1 468	1 645	1 741
Vienna	1 429	1 492	1 551	1 725	1 798
Nairobi	1 590	1 449	1 505	1 346	1 340

2. Workload of revisers

38. In response to the request made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (see A/71/549, para. 14) for information on the workload of revisers for the six translation services with respect to previous years to be provided in future reports on the pattern of conferences, an overview of the annual translation output that was revised by the language services of New York and Geneva in the period from 2014 to 2016, which accounted for just under 90 per cent of translation output during that period, is presented in table 2.

Table 2
Revision workload of translation services, by language, 2014-2016

(Number of words revised)

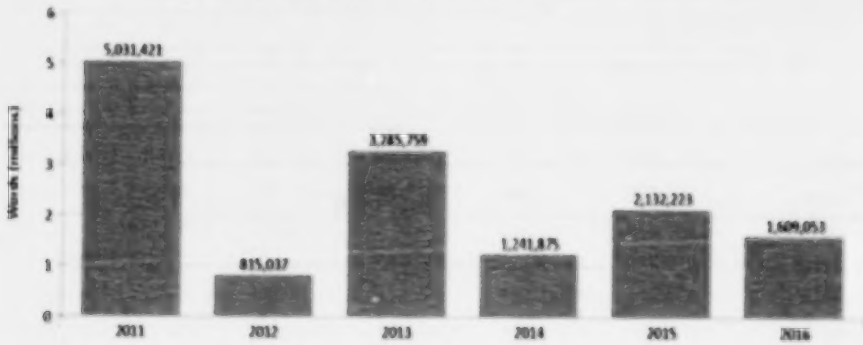
	2014		*2015*		*2016*	
	Geneva	*New York*	*Geneva*	*New York*	*Geneva*	*New York*
Arabic	4 760 095	9 438 942	4 236 931	10 477 425	3 424 687	9 447 191
Chinese	2 188 280	7 022 266	2 282 340	6 836 475	3 008 284	7 130 439
English	2 105 956	543 249	2 346 653	633 481	1 649 589	873 342
French	5 915 440	4 990 363	5 117 610	7 073 286	7 226 111	7 924 125
Russian	5 273 776	4 234 129	5 145 611	4 615 050	5 966 459	3 813 751
Spanish	5 966 805	4 384 244	6 750 897	4 638 925	7 653 825	5 498 698
Total	**26 210 352**	**30 613 193**	**25 880 042**	**34 274 642**	**28 928 965**	**34 687 544**

39. The proportion of translation output that is revised depends on the nature of the documents submitted for translation and the experience and availability of revisers, self-revising translators and, in some cases, temporary staff, who have the language combinations and specialized knowledge required. The services accordingly assign work for translation subject to revision or for self-revision, ensuring that the criteria of quality and timely delivery are met in the most efficient manner possible.

3. Workload sharing

40. The volume of workload sharing among the duty stations is shown in figure VIII. The surge in 2011 was due to the one-time transfer of documentation backlog from the United Nations Office at Geneva to New York. The increase in 2013 was the result of the transfer of the processing of pre-session documents of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women from Geneva to New York. The processing of such documents is now fully integrated into the latter's workload and no longer counted as workload sharing. The total amount shared in 2016 was 1.6 million words. Although this amount is 25 per cent less than in 2015, procedures were put in place to optimize the potential for workload sharing in the future so that workload sharing takes place when and where it matters most. Documents management teams at the various duty stations now consult regularly (on a monthly or bimonthly basis) to arrange workload sharing. In addition, the sharing of the editing workload began in 2016, when the Division of Conference Management in Geneva edited approximately 179,000 words for New York and approximately 18,000 words for Nairobi. In turn, New York edited approximately 107,000 words for Geneva. However, concurrent activity peaks across the Secretariat may limit its ability to consistently take advantage of workload sharing opportunities year-round.

Figure VIII
Workload sharing among duty stations, 2011-2016



B. Vacancies

41. The vacancy rates by duty station in key occupational groups as at 31 December 2016 are presented in table 3, with the 2015 figures presented for comparison in table 4. In nearly all cases, the vacancy rates fell. The number of vacancies in text processing at Headquarters reflects a temporary surge caused by a combination of factors that were addressed in early 2017, and a quarter of those vacancies were filled by April that year. All the translation and text-processing posts in Nairobi were filled by the end of 2016, although the interpretation vacancy rate there remained high, largely due to the lack of P-4 posts and hence of a career path for interpreters at the duty station.

Table 3
Vacancy rates in key occupational groups by duty station as at 31 December 2016

	Headquarters		*Geneva*		*Vienna*		*Nairobi*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Interpretation services	8	6	8	8	0	0	7	37
Translation services	45		9	5		5	0	0
Text-processing units	24	20	9	10	1	3	0	0 (9)
Editorial control/terminology and referencing	1	3	1	5	1	17	N/A	N/A
Verbatim Reporting Service	4	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	**82**		**27**	**7.1**	**4**	**3.7**	**7**	**11.3**

Abbreviation: N/A, not applicable.

Table 4
Vacancy rates in key occupational groups by duty station as at 31 December 2015

	Headquarters		*Geneva*		*Vienna*		*Nairobi*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Interpretation services	10	8	0	0	1	4	5	25
Translation services	37	12	11	6	2	5	5	22
Text-processing units	11	9	7	6	1	3	2	9
Editorial control/ terminology and referencing	7	13	3	14	1	14	N/A	N/A
Verbatim Reporting Service	3	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	**68**	**10.4**	**21**	**5.1**	**5**	**4.6**	**12**	**17.9**

Abbreviation: N/A, not applicable.

C. Recruitment

42. Several innovations aimed at improving the efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility of the Secretariat's activities to replenish recruitment rosters and fill language posts were introduced in 2016.

1. Recruitment testing

43. Five language competitive examinations were held, and these, together with the last examination held at the end of 2015, resulted in 79 language professionals being rostered for subsequent recruitment in 2016. Building on the successful piloting of remote testing and interviewing in the examinations for English translators and editors in 2015, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management held its first fully remote, online competitive examination in 2016. Remote testing makes the recruitment process far more accessible to candidates who for financial, physical or other personal circumstances find it difficult to travel to test centres. The examination chosen for the pilot was the one for Spanish translators. To make it even more accessible to candidates in more regions, the third language requirement was waived for holders of university degrees in translation. In addition, a vigorous outreach campaign was conducted to encourage potential candidates to sit the examination, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean. As a result, the number of applicants reached a record high of 4,777, almost five times the figures recorded in previous years. The 3,569 applicants who met the requirements were invited to sit the exam. Gratifyingly, the proportion of applicants from Latin America increased from 19 per cent to 58 per cent, and the proportion of successful candidates from Latin America increased from 6 per cent to 22 per cent.

44. The testing platform for this first fully remote language competitive examination was developed in collaboration with the Office of Human Resources Management, for whom the shift to remote testing represents considerable savings. The administration costs associated with the pen-and-paper tests held in 2012-2015 ranged from $1,100 to $1,700 per successful candidate and represented outlays of between $40,000 and $100,000 per year. In comparison, the fully remote online examination held in 2016, for Spanish translators, incurred no such administration costs. The first part of the examination, as in previous examinations, included three translation exercises, but this time they were completed using text-processing software and with access to the resources that translators routinely use in their work.

The second part, which was also conducted remotely, included proctored translation exercises and a competency-based interview. Feedback from test takers on the new, remote format was highly positive. Building on this success, all the language competitive examinations for translators, translators/précis-writers, editors, verbatim reporters and production editors in 2017 will be held remotely and apply the lessons learned, including with regard to the use of social media to inform and attract potential candidates. In addition, in order to achieve efficiencies of scale and increase the flexibility and mobility of staff (and hence the possibility of workload sharing), the recruitment of these language professionals will, as of 2017, be done through combined examinations, whereby successful candidates are placed on a single roster for subsequent recruitment and loan or transfer to any of these functional areas. Steps were also taken to match the assignment of new recruits with the specialization of different duty stations.

45. In addition to the competitive examinations held to fill rosters, 139 ad hoc tests were organized to recruit temporary freelance staff. Freelance contracts serve as excellent training for younger language professionals, who often go on to sit the language competitive examinations.

2. Outreach to potential recruits

46. Outreach to potential recruits expanded considerably in 2016. The network of universities that have signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations on training language professionals continues to be a strong source of new recruits. The proportion of successful candidates in the 2016 language competitive examinations that were graduates from such universities remained high, at 42 per cent, compared with 57 per cent in 2015. The possibility of offering associate membership to select universities is being explored, particularly in the case of universities in underrepresented regions that do not meet all the criteria for a memorandum of understanding, but have the potential to develop suitable programmes and candidates for the United Nations language services.

47. Outreach to universities in underrepresented regions expanded, as part of both the promotion of the language competitive examinations and the Pan-African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation. The latter is a project co-funded by the European Commission and United Nations Office at Nairobi with a view to preparing highly qualified African conference interpreters and translators to meet the needs of the African market. Two of the six universities involved are also members of the memorandum of understanding universities network, and the Consortium secretariat coordinates regularly with the focal points of the United Nations universities outreach programme of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. As at 31 December 2016, the Consortium was supporting 125 students through scholarships to cover tuition fees and grants for work placements, as well as 34 trainers through exchange visits, and four PhD research projects. During the year, Consortium funds were used to support train-the-trainer workshops, attendance at meetings of the Executive Committee of the Consortium, facilities maintenance and the procurement of specialized equipment.

3. Training of potential recruits

48. The internship programme of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has also expanded, with 22 language services hosting 220 young professionals on internships, traineeships and short practicums, compared with 23 services and 117 young professionals in 2015. The most notable increase was in the arrangement of silent-booth practice sessions for interpretation students. Building on the success of the remote coaching provided by services to translation students in previous years, a remote internship was piloted in 2016 and 2017 with a

student from Belgrano University in Argentina, with a view to expanding work experience opportunities to more young professionals in underrepresented regions.

49. Traineeships were organized in New York for Arabic and French interpreters to mitigate the short supply of such interpreters, with great success. Eight of the ten participants in the Arabic traineeship went on to pass the language competitive examinations for Arabic interpreters, and one of the six in the French traineeship went on to pass the competitive examination for French interpreters, with the other five passing the freelance test, which qualified them to occupy temporary positions. The participants had all been carefully selected and contracted at the P-1 level for the duration of the traineeships (five months and three months, respectively). Six staff interpreters were assigned as trainers. In-house trainceships for English and Russian interpreters have been organized in 2017.

4. Increased use of social media and improved social media presence

50. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has continued to increase its use of social media to raise awareness of career opportunities in conference services at all duty stations. It has multiplied its reach by diversifying its presence on social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+ and flickr), expanding coverage in all official United Nations languages and developing methods of work resulting in more consistent branding, enhanced brand recognition and greater engagement with the public. This translated into more visits to the Department United Nations language careers website, including from 6,453 new users, and a rapid expansion of the Department's audience in most languages.

V. Improving conference services and their accessibility

A. Use of United Nations premises in New York

51. Requests to use United Nations premises in New York for special events, such as concerts and film screenings, have risen dramatically in recent years. The hours taken up by such events soared from 71 in 2014, to 202 in 2015 and 555 in 2016, placing a huge additional burden on meetings management staff. To prevent interference with the proceedings of intergovernmental processes and to protect meeting rooms from wear and tear, the Central Planning and Coordination Division at Headquarters worked with all departments concerned on a new request approval policy, whereby special events must (a) be in full compliance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations; (b) be strictly non-commercial in nature; (c) not alter the layout of rooms without the prior permission of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management; and (d) normally be held in one particular room and on weekends or after business hours on weekdays. A note verbale has been sent to the Permanent Missions of the Member States notifying them of the new policy. In addition, a costing and charging mechanism for such events, to fund the extra maintenance of the conference rooms and staffing needs they generate, will be developed in conjunction with the Department of Management in order to ensure that the core functions of servicing the Organization's official meetings are not affected. The administrative instruction entitled "Use of United Nations premises for meetings, conferences, special events and exhibits" (ST/AI/416), dated 26 April 1996, which guides the use of United Nations premises, must be revised

accordingly after the launch of the "one-stop shop" for conference service requesters, scheduled for 2017, in order to incorporate the new guidelines.[2]

B. The e-deleGATE portal

52. A suite of e-services is being developed to streamline procedures, reduce the costs and environmental impact of meetings and generally increase the efficiency of conference services, as well as enhance the experience for participants. These will be made available through the new, user-friendly e-deleGATE portal, which is replacing decades-old paper-based processes. The first set of these services were introduced in 2016, namely: eAccreditation, eSpeakers (for the general debate, General Assembly plenary meetings and meetings of the main committees of the General Assembly) and eSponsorship (for draft resolutions for main committees and plenaries). Those scheduled for implementation in 2017 include: eCorrespondence, eBlueBook, eRegistration and eList of participants/eMembership.

C. Accessibility

53. The Secretariat continued to provide sign language interpretation, Braille embossing and closed captioning to the bodies entitled to such services in New York and Geneva and to the extrabudgetary clients that requested and funded them. It also continued to lend assistive devices to meeting participants from its stock at the Accessibility Centre at Headquarters. In May 2016, the stock was upgraded through a generous donation from the Government of the Republic of Korea. A temporary accessibility kiosk was operated in the visitors' lobby during the main part of the General Assembly session. In addition, steps were taken to standardize the planning and recruitment of sign language interpretation teams to service the meetings entitled to sign interpretation and to increase the pool of qualified sign language interpreters, which is extremely limited. Work was done by the duty stations to establish shared rosters to cover demand, and informal consultations were initiated to lay the groundwork for applying the Agreement between the United Nations Common System/Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the International Association of Conference Interpreters to sign language interpreters.

54. The Secretariat is committed to mainstreaming accessibility considerations in its work and operations. In April 2016, it was decided that a course would be charted towards improving the accessibility of conference services at all four duty stations based on a common approach, including common technological arrangements and formats, operating standards, costing models, conditions of service and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The Secretariat coordinates its efforts within the Interdepartmental Task Force on Accessibility and other conference services providers through the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications, to remain abreast of the latest developments in the field, and its accessibility focal points maintain regular contact with representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities.

55. With regard to physical facilities, increased accessibility is a feature of both the capital master plan at Headquarters and the strategic heritage plan in Geneva, and future renovations at the United Nations offices in Nairobi and Vienna are expected to improve the accessibility of their conference facilities as well. It is recommended that the accessibility of conference facilities be discussed under the

[2] The "one-stop shop" system will provide a single entry point for requesting meeting services, with an easy-to-use self-service interface and streamlined processes that will enhance coordination among all service providers at Headquarters.

agenda items relevant to the maintenance of United Nations premises and not in the context of the pattern of conferences.

VI. Measuring the quality of conference services

A. Feedback from users of conference services

56. The Department is committed to providing high-quality conference services to Member States in an efficient and cost-effective manner. To measure this, it collects feedback from Member States through global e-surveys, annual informational meetings and ad hoc surveys organized by each duty station. The e-survey is user-friendly, available year-round and designed to capture feedback from Member States on common indicators with respect to meeting services, translation and interpretation services and the overall quality of conference services at the four duty stations. Globally, 93 per cent of the survey respondents rated the conference services provided as either "good" or "very good".

57. Also, to complement the e-survey, additional information and ratings were collected on technical secretariat services in New York and from six selected meetings in Geneva, where more than 92 per cent of the 144 respondents also provided "good" or "very good" overall ratings. The United Nations Office at Nairobi carried out surveys for meetings held in Nairobi and Cairo, for which conference services were, once again, rated as "good" or "excellent" by 93 per cent of the respondents.

B. Informational meetings with delegations

58. Informational meetings held with representatives of permanent missions served to highlight developments in the provision of conference services and outline activities in recruitment and terminology management. Mission representatives at some meetings in New York stressed the need to strengthen quality control, modernize language use and fulfil the mandate for language parity. The informational meeting in Geneva included practical information on arranging conference services and ensuring that interpreters could faithfully render a delegate's statement in other languages. The increasing speed at which delegates deliver statements at official meetings seriously impinges on the Secretariat's ability to fulfil its mandate and provide quality interpretation, and all duty stations plan to continue to advocate with Member States to ensure that statements and interventions are delivered at the rate of no more than 100-120 words (or 200-240 syllables in Chinese) per minute. Participants at the meetings held by the United Nations Office at Vienna were encouraged to support its efforts to make more rational use of language service resources and to address specific queries and suggestions to the relevant language staff. Meetings with the committees of permanent representatives in Nairobi were used to present trends in the conference management service's performance indicators, outline challenges and clarify mandates and expectations.

VII. Conclusions, recommendations and proposed next steps

59. The Secretariat has responded swiftly and proactively to the challenges confronting its conference services, and the strategy of continuous improvement and modernization adopted by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management is producing the desired results in terms of the fulfilment of its mandate to ensure the quality, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, sustainability and

accessibility of the conference service it provides. The progress made in recent years on key indicators was sustained in 2016. All requests for meeting rooms were met, all but a fraction of requests for interpretation services were fulfilled, vacancy rates fell, and significant improvements were recorded in the timely processing, issuance and simultaneous distribution of documents. Moreover, the innovations piloted in recruitment testing, the management of contractual translation and the utilization of internal capacity are yielding positive results by generating greater efficiencies and have paved the way for continued progress in the months and years ahead.

60. In 2017 and beyond, the Secretariat will continue to engage actively with calendar bodies and author departments with a view to optimizing the utilization of meeting services and the planning of documentation processing.

61. Due to the magnitude and complexity of servicing 13,000 meetings every year at Headquarters, more than 10 major service providers in four departments are involved in providing requested services, which makes it necessary for clients to contact different service providers by e-mail or phone for the same meeting, fill out multiple forms with the same information, wait for separate confirmations and receive multiple bills, causing much inconvenience and frustration. The "one-stop shop" project, planned for roll-out in 2017, will provide a single entry point for requests for meeting services, with an easy-to-use, self-service interface for service requesters and a streamlined business process among all service providers as well as single billing. Upon its successful roll out at Headquarters, the system is also expected to be expanded to Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi at a later stage.

62. The United Nations Journal covers daily and forthcoming meetings at Headquarters. In order to facilitate the intergovernmental process through enhanced multilingualism and the use of information technology, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management is undertaking a Journal revamping project. The strategic business purpose of the project is to allow for the publication of the Journal in a way that meets, in the most cost-efficient manner, the multilingualism requirement stipulated in rule 55 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, namely the publication of the Journal in the six official languages year-round, and to provide better services to clients, making use of information technology. This would be achieved through a two-pronged approach: (a) standardizing content to enable the automation of translation, as much as possible, through the use of standard pre-translated text; and (b) leveraging technology to establish a fully electronic workflow and offer a more user-friendly experience through the development of a digital version (website and mobile application). Thanks to a robust web-based content management system, Journal-related business processes, including content submission, processing, translation and formatting, will be streamlined and automated as much as possible, leading to considerable efficiency gains.

63. The technical feasibility of piloting remote interpretation services, initially on a very limited scale, will also be examined with a view to increasing the availability of interpretation services and the utilization of in-house capacity across duty stations located in different time zones.

64. To continue to replenish and rejuvenate language capacity, outreach with universities and training institutions will continue, as funds permit, and traineeships and freelance contracts will be arranged for language professionals with priority language combinations. The fifth conference of universities that have signed memorandums of understanding with the United Nations was held at Headquarters in April 2017, and future such conferences will be used as a unique opportunity to strengthen collaboration with training partners and reach out to stakeholders. Together with the increased use of social media, the shift to fully remote testing,

successfully piloted in 2015 and 2016, will expand candidate pools and help to build healthy recruitment rosters. With a view to increasing the versatility of the workforce and reducing the number of examinations that must be organized, combined competitive examinations for all language functions — with the exception of interpreting — will be piloted. In addition, as indicated in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 (A/72/6 (sect. 2), para. 2.19), the Editing Section will be merged with the English Translation Service in New York to facilitate cross-assignments, and the text-processing units will be redeployed to the translation services in order to ensure total alignment of priorities and optimize planning within the document processing chain. More flexible working and telecommuting arrangements for translators will be explored to enhance translation capacity in peak workload periods.

65. The automation of many research tasks through the deployment of eLUNa has not only made it possible to reassign reference and terminology staff to other support functions or abolish several posts, but allows translators in many cases to focus more on the task of translation per se, in other words, on accurately conveying the message of the original in, and according to the norms of, the target language. This means that junior translators can now develop the skills required to become self-revisers sooner. A proposed diamond-shaped staffing structure will therefore be submitted for approval in the budget for 2018-2019, to increase the number of self-revisers and at the same time balance translation capacity across languages, with due consideration given to language specificity.

66. In addition to the incorporation of the new eLUNa interface for editors, features to maximize the accessibility of the tool, especially for visually impaired users, will be pursued. The quality of eLUNa and the other language- and conference-management tools developed by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has attracted the attention of other organizations in the United Nations system, some of which approached the Department in 2016 with requests for access to such tools. A project proposal will be submitted to the High-level Committee on Management of the Chief Executives' Board for Coordination to establish eLUNa as a common tool for translators in the United Nations system organizations on a cost-recovery basis.

Action recommended of the General Assembly

67. It is recommended that the General Assembly:

(a) Take note of the report;

(b) Urge those intergovernmental bodies whose average utilization of allocated conference services has been below the benchmark of 80 per cent to take this into account when planning their future sessions, with a view to achieving that benchmark;

(c) Encourage further harmonization of working methods across all duty stations, including the full implementation, improvement and mainstreaming of existing conference management systems.

United Nations A/72/117

General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 June 2017

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Item 136 of the preliminary list*
Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019**

Revised estimates relating to the Office of Counter-Terrorism under section 3, Political affairs, section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, and section 36, Staff assessment

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 71/291, whereby the Assembly established the Office of Counter-Terrorism. The present report contains the revised estimates proposed under section 3, Political affairs, section 29D, Office of Central Support Services and section 36, Staff assessment, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019, in the additional amount of $1,097,700 net ($1,221,900 gross).

* A/72/50.
** A summary of the approved programme budget will be issued as A/72/6/Add.1.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/291, the General Assembly welcomed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/71/858) and decided to establish the Office of Counter-Terrorism, to be headed by an Under-Secretary-General, in accordance with the competencies and functions set out in the report of the Secretary-General. In the same resolution, the General Assembly welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General to transfer the current Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, together with their existing staff, as well as all associated regular and extrabudgetary resources, out of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat into the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

2. The Secretary-General informed the General Assembly in his statement on the programme budget implications in connection with draft resolution A/71/L.66 on strengthening the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (A/C.5/71/22), that, owing to the timing of draft resolution A/71/L.66, the requirements for the biennium 2018-2019 could not be included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 and that, subject to the adoption of the draft resolution by the General Assembly, the requirements would be presented in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 in line with existing budgetary procedures.

3. The present report contains the changes and revised resource requirements for the biennium 2018-2019 under section 3, Political affairs; section 29D, Office of Central Support Services and section 36, Staff assessment, arising from General Assembly resolution 71/291, reflecting the transfer of resources for 2018-2019 from subprogramme 6, Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, and programme support, under the Department of Political Affairs, to the Office of Counter-Terrorism ($2,042,300), as well as additional resources reflecting full biennial resources for two posts established by General Assembly resolution 71/291 under section 3, Political affairs, section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, and section 36, Staff assessment ($1,097,700 net of staff assessment ($1,221,900, gross)).

II. Relationship of the current proposals to the biennial programme plan and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019

4. The current proposals relate to subprogramme 6, Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, of programme 2, Political affairs, of the biennial programme plan for the period 2018-2019; and to section 3, Political affairs, section 29D, Office of Central Support Services and section 36, Staff assessment, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019. In line with the decision of the Assembly to establish the Office of Counter-Terrorism (resolution 71/291), the title of subprogramme 6, Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, has been revised to Office of Counter-Terrorism and updated in the Strategy as detailed in the consolidated changes to the biennial programme plan as reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 (A/72/84/Add.1).

III. Budgetary implications of the establishment of the Office of Counter-Terrorism

5. Additional resource requirements for the proposals contained in the present report for the biennium 2018-2019 amount to $1,097,700 (net of staff assessment), as summarized in tables 1-14 by budget section, by programme and by object of expenditure.

Overview

Table 1
Resource requirements by section
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Budget section	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
3. Political affairs	1 228 295.8	1 034.1	1 229 329.9
29D. Office of Central Support Services	168 542.9	63.6	168 606.5
36. Staff assessment	501 590.1	124.2	501 714.3
Total (gross)	**1 898 428.8**	**1 221.9**	**1 899 650.7**
Total (net of staff assessment)	**1 396 838.7**	**1 097.7**	**1 397 936.4**

Table 2
Resource requirements by object of expenditure
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Object of expenditure	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
Posts	164 010.8	907.2	164 918.0
Other staff costs	3 939.5	–	3 939.5
Consultants	460.6	–	460.6
Experts	340.2	–	340.2
Travel of representatives	1 753.3	–	1 753.3
Travel of staff	2 839.7	114.3	2 954.0
Contractual services	6 382.8	8.4	6 391.2
General operating expenses	104 301.7	65.8	104 367.5
Hospitality	117.2	–	117.2
Supplies and materials	1 514.3	2.0	1 516.3
Furniture and equipment	1 565.7	–	1 565.7
Other	1 109 612.9	–	1 109 612.9
Total (net of staff assessment)	**1 396 838.7**	**1 097.7**	**1 397 936.4**
Staff assessment	501 590.1	124.2	501 714.3
Total (gross)	**1 898 428.8**	**1 221.9**	**1 899 650.7**

Section 3
Political affairs

Table 3
Financial resources by component
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Regular budget

	2018-2019 estimate	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
A. Department of Political Affairs			
1. Policymaking organs			
(a) Security Council	225.3	–	225.3
(b) Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People	75.8	–	75.8
Subtotal, policymaking organs	**301.1**	**–**	**301.1**
2. Executive direction and management	7 321.2	–	7 321.2
3. Programme of work			
Subprogramme 1, Prevention, management and resolution of conflicts	43 670.6	–	43 670.6
Subprogramme 2, Electoral assistance	7 487.6	–	7 487.6
Subprogramme 3, Security Council affairs	13 653.5	–	13 653.5
Subprogramme 4, Decolonization	1 592.5	–	1 592.5
Subprogramme 5, Question of Palestine	5 765.8	–	5 765.8
Subprogramme 6, Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force	2 016.2	(2 016.2)	–
Subtotal, programme of work	**74 186.2**	**(2 016.2)**	**72 170.0**
4. Programme support	6 186.4	(26.1)	6 160.3
Subtotal, A	**87 994.9**	**(2 042.3)**	**85 952.6**
B. Special political missions	1 109 612.9	–	1 109 612.9
C. Office of Counter-Terrorism	–	3 076.4	3 076.4
D. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process	17 285.7	–	17 285.7
E. Peacebuilding Support Office	5 975.8	–	5 975.8
F. United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory	5 431.8	–	5 431.8
G. United Nations Office to the African Union	1 994.7	–	1 994.7
Total (net of staff assessment)	**1 228 295.8**	**1 034.1**	**1 229 329.9**

Table 4
Resource requirements by object of expenditure
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Object of expenditure	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
Posts	107 097.4	907.2	108 004.6
Other staff costs	1 296.7	–	1 296.7
Consultants	132.9	–	132.9
Experts	340.2	–	340.2
Travel of representatives	1 753.3	–	1 753.3
Travel of staff	2 727.9	114.3	2 842.2
Contractual services	2 098.4	8.4	2 106.8
General operating expenses	2 309.6	2.2	2 311.8
Hospitality	111.7	–	111.7
Supplies and materials	296.3	2.0	298.3
Furniture and equipment	518.5	–	518.5
Other	1 109 612.9	–	1 109 612.9
Total (net of staff assessment)	**1 228 295.8**	**1 034.1**	**1 229 329.9**

A. Department of Political Affairs

Programme of work

Subprogramme 6
Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (transferred to component C, Office of Counter-Terrorism and renamed as subprogramme 6, Office of Counter-Terrorism)

6. The General Assembly, by its resolution 71/291, welcomed the initiative of the Secretary-General to transfer the current Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, together with their existing staff, as well as all associated regular and extrabudgetary resources, out of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat into the Office of Counter-Terrorism. Accordingly, the resources proposed for 2018-2019 contained in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 (A/72/6 (Sect. 3)) for subprogramme 6, Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, under the Department of Political Affairs, will be transferred to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

Table 5
Resource requirements: subprogramme 6, Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Object of expenditure	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
Post	1 931.7	(1 931.7)	–
Non-post	84.5	(84.5)	–
Total (net of staff assessment)	**2 016.2**	**(2 016.2)**	**–**
Extrabudgetary	35 589.2	(35 589.2)	–
Total	**37 605.4**	**(37 605.4)**	**–**

Table 6
Resource requirements by object of expenditure

Object of expenditure	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
Posts	1 931.7	(1 931.7)	–
Travel of staff	84.5	(84.5)	–
Total	**2 016.2**	**(2 016.2)**	**–**

7. The decrease of $2,016,200 reflects the transfer of resources proposed for 2018-2019 contained in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 for subprogramme 6 (A/72/6 (Sect. 3) to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

Programme support

8. The revised resources for programme support are reflected in tables 7 and 8.

Table 7
Resource requirements: programme support

Object of expenditure	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
Post	2 997.0	–	2 997.0
Non-post	3 189.4	(26.1)	3 163.3
Total (net of staff assessment)	**6 186.4**	**(26.1)**	**6 160.3**

Table 8
Resource requirements by object of expenditure

Object of expenditure	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
Posts	2 997.0	–	2 997.0
Other staff costs	881.6	–	881.6
Contractual services	1 266.7	(19.5)	1 247.2
General operating expenses	787.4	(5.0)	782.4
Supplies and materials	72.7	(1.6)	71.1
Furniture and equipment	181.0	–	181.0
Total (net of staff assessment)	**6 186.4**	**(26.1)**	**6 160.3**

9. The decrease of $26,100 reflects the transfer of operational costs such as contractual services covering the standard cost of service-level agreements for maintenance support services and other services provided by the Office of Information and Communications Technology ($19,500), general operating expenses for rental of office equipment and communications services ($5,000) and supplies and materials for stationery and office supplies ($1,600) for the six posts being transferred from the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force under the Department of Political Affairs to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

C. Office of Counter-Terrorism, subprogramme 6

10. The Office of Counter-Terrorism, including the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, plays the central role in ensuring overall coordination and coherence in the counter-terrorism efforts of the United Nations system and facilitating and providing capacity-building assistance to Member States. In line with the decision of the Assembly to establish the Office of Counter-Terrorism (resolution 71/291), the title of subprogramme 6, Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, has been revised to Office of Counter-Terrorism and updated in the Strategy as detailed in the consolidated changes to the biennial programme plan as reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 (A/72/84/Add.1). Responsibility for the implementation of subprogramme 6, Office of Counter-Terrorism, rests with component C, Office of Counter-Terrorism, under section 3, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019.

Table 9
Objectives for the biennium, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement and performance measures

Objective of the Organization: Effective response to the threat of international terrorism

Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat	*Indicators of achievement*		*Performance measures*			
			2018-2019	*2016-2017*	*2014-2015*	*2012-2013*
(a) Strengthened capacity of Member States to respond effectively to the threat of international terrorism by implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy	Increase in the number of countries receiving coordinated United Nations assistance for the integrated implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, including the prevention of violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism [number of countries]	Target	9	7	5	3
		Estimate		7	5	3
		Actual			5	3
(b) Strengthened collaboration among Member States, entities of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations, and civil society partners to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy	Stronger engagement with Member States, United Nations entities and civil society in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy [number of capacity-building workshops to facilitate the implementation of the Strategy]	Target	56	22	3	2
		Estimate		22	3	3
		Actual			3	2

External factors

11. The subprogramme is expected to achieve its objectives and expected accomplishments on the assumption that: (a) Member States are willing to strengthen cooperation among themselves and Governments are willing to cooperate with each other in combating terrorism; (b) the relevant United Nations system entities are ready to work together on the programme initiatives and activities under the auspices of the Task Force, providing required substantive input, taking pertinent implementation leadership and providing operational support; (c) relevant international and regional organizations and national institutions are ready to collaborate with the Task Force on relevant programme initiatives and activities; and (d) there exists the required level of capacity on the part of the recipient countries to work with the Task Force and its entities.

Outputs

12. During the biennium 2018-2019, the following outputs will be delivered:

Table 10
Categories of outputs and final outputs

Outputs	*Quantity*
Servicing of intergovernmental and expert bodies, and reports thereto (regular budget)	
General Assembly	
Substantive servicing of meetings	
1. Meeting on biennial review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy	1
2. Briefings of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force to the General Assembly	8
3. High-level meeting on counter-terrorism issues	1

Outputs	*Quantity*
Parliamentary documentation	
4. Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the United Nations system	1
Other substantive activities (regular budget/extrabudgetary)	
Booklets, pamphlets, fact sheets, wallcharts, information kits	
5. Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force newsletter ("The Beam")	4
Technical materials	
Updating and maintenance of:	
6. The website of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force	1
7. The Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism portal	1
International cooperation and inter-agency coordination and liaison (regular budget/extrabudgetary)	
Substantive servicing of inter-agency meetings	
8. Coordination meetings of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force entities on United Nations system-wide counter-terrorism efforts	8
9. Capacity-building meetings and workshops to strengthen engagement with Member States, United Nations entities and civil society in the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy	56
Documentation of inter-agency meetings	
10. Reports by the 12 Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force working groups on sharing best practices and experiences in implementing various elements of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy	1

13. The distribution of resources for the Office is reflected in tables 11 and 12.

Table 11
Resource requirements: subprogramme 6, Office of Counter-Terrorism

Object of expenditure	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
Post	–	2 838.9	2 838.9
Non-post	–	237.5	237.5
Total (net of staff assessment)	**–**	**3 076.4**	**3 076.4**
Extrabudgetary	–	35 589.2	35 589.2
Total	**–**	**38 665.6**	**38 665.6**

Table 12
Resource requirements by object of expenditure

Object of expenditure	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
Posts	–	2 838.9	2 838.9
Travel of staff	–	198.8	198.8
Contractual services	–	27.9	27.9

Object of expenditure	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
General operating expenses	–	7.2	7.2
Supplies and materials	–	3.6	3.6
Total (net of staff assessment)	**–**	**3 076.4**	**3 076.4**

14. The amount of $3,076,400 would provide for eight posts (1 Under-Secretary-General, 1 D-2, 1 P-5, 1 P-4, 2 P-3 and 2 General Service (Other level)) and non-post requirements to support the implementation of the mandate of the Office. The non-post resources comprise travel of staff ($198,800) and operational costs such as contractual services covering the standard cost of service-level agreements for maintenance support services and other services provided by the Office of Information and Communications Technology ($27,900), general operating expenses for rental of office equipment and communications services ($7,200) and supplies and materials for stationery and office supplies ($3,600). The provisions reflect: (a) post and non-post resources for the six posts being transferred from subprogramme 6, Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, under the Department of Political Affairs to the Office of Counter-Terrorism; and (b) the delayed impact and resources for the full biennium for two new posts (1 Under-Secretary-General, 1 P-3) approved by the General Assembly by its resolution 71/291 in June 2017.

15. During the biennium 2018-2019, estimated extrabudgetary resources amounting to $35.6 million, including 35 posts (1 D-1, 2 P-5, 9 P-4, 8 P-3, 3 P-2 and 12 General Service (Other level)), would be utilized to support the activities carried out by the Office. The resources relate primarily to the activities to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre in implementing its programme of work. Extrabudgetary resources would provide for essential support to fulfil the functions of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office, including the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, in supporting the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. These functions include: (a) organizing capacity-building workshops to facilitate the implementation of the Strategy and enhance international cooperation on implementation of the Strategy; (b) coordinating policy advice, sharing best practices in countering terrorism and supporting the implementation of various elements of the Strategy facilitated by nine Task Force working groups; and (c) assisting with the integrated implementation of the Strategy and United Nations system-wide delivery, facilitated by the Integrated Assistance for Countering Terrorism Initiative.

Section 29D
Office of Central Support Services

16. The revised resource requirements for the Office of Central Support Services is reflected in tables 13 and 14.

Table 13
Resource requirements: Office of Central Support Services

Object of expenditure	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
Post	56 913.4	–	56 913.4
Non-post	111 629.5	63.6	111 693.1
Total (net of staff assessment)	**168 542.9**	**63.6**	**168 606.5**

Table 14
Resource requirements by object of expenditure

Object of expenditure	*2018-2019 estimate*	*Changes and additional requirements*	*2018-2019 revised estimate*
Posts	56 913.4	–	56 913.4
Other staff costs	2 642.8	–	2 642.8
Consultants	327.7	–	327.7
Travel of staff	111.8	–	111.8
Contractual services	4 284.4	–	4 284.4
General operating expenses	101 992.1	63.6	102 055.7
Hospitality	5.5	–	5.5
Supplies and materials	1 218.0	–	1 218.0
Furniture and equipment	1 047.2	–	1 047.2
Total (net of staff assessment)	**168 542.9**	**63.6**	**168 606.5**

17. The proposed additional resources under non-post items amounting to $63,600 would provide for rental of premises for the full biennium related to the two posts approved for establishment by resolution 71/291.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

18. **The General Assembly is requested:**

(a) **To approve the additional resources proposed in the amount of $1,097,700 (net of staff assessment);**

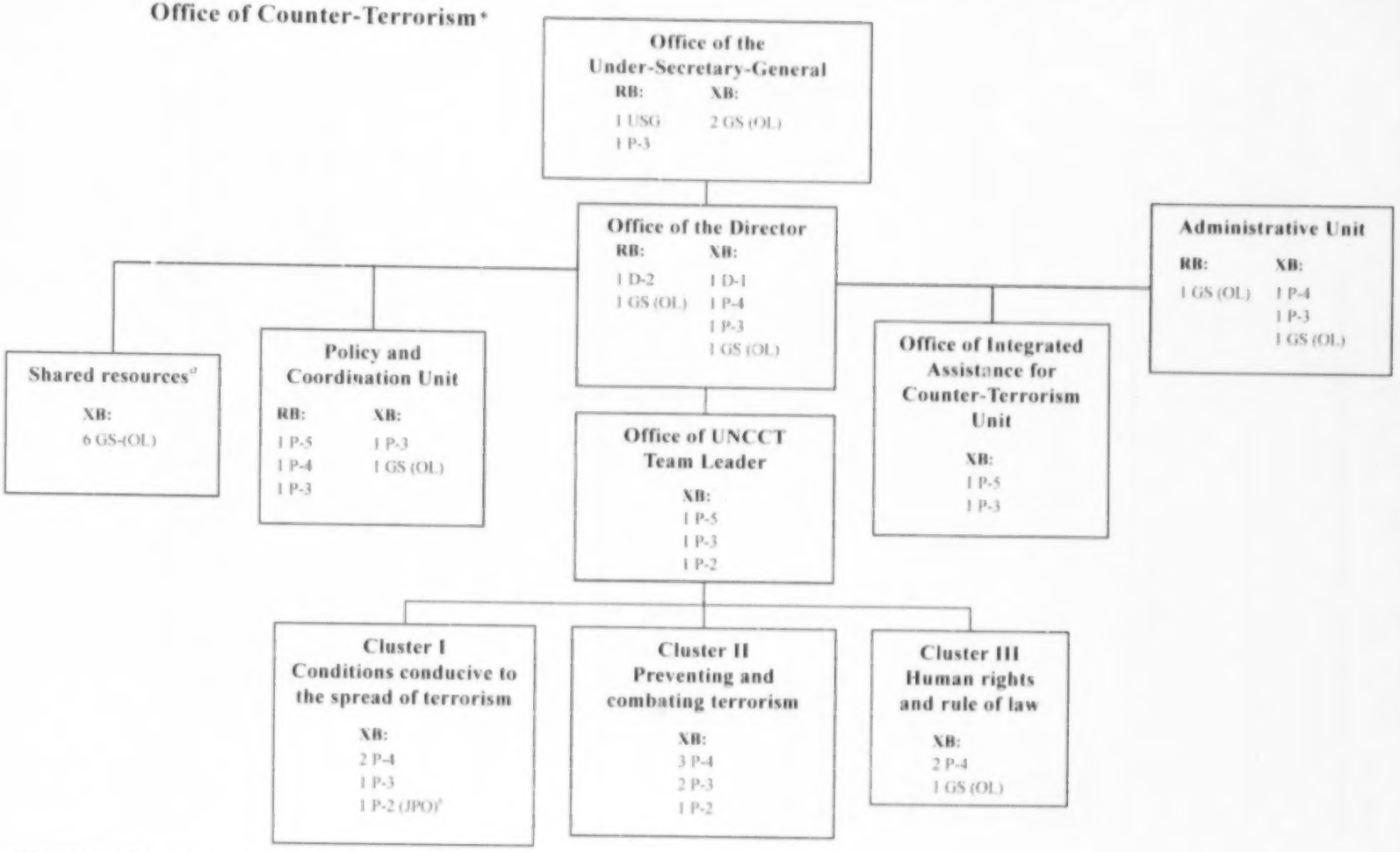
(b) **To appropriate an additional amount of $1,097,700 (net of staff assessment) under section 3, Political affairs ($1,034,100), and section 29D, Office of Central Support Services ($63,600), of the programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019;**

(c) **To appropriate an additional amount of $124,200 under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment, of the programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019.**

Annex

Organizational structure and distribution of posts for the biennium 2018-2019

Office of Counter-Terrorism*


Office of the Under-Secretary-General
RB: 1 USG, 1 P-3
XB: 2 GS (OL)
Office of the Director
RB: 1 D-2, 1 GS (OL)
XB: 1 D-1, 1 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 GS (OL)
Administrative Unit
RB: 1 GS (OL)
XB: 1 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 GS (OL)
Shared resources[a]
XB: 6 GS-(OL)
Policy and Coordination Unit
RB: 1 P-5, 1 P-4, 1 P-3
XB: 1 P-3, 1 GS (OL)
Office of UNCCT Team Leader
XB: 1 P-5, 1 P-3, 1 P-2
Office of Integrated Assistance for Counter-Terrorism Unit
XB: 1 P-5, 1 P-3
Cluster I
Conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism
XB: 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 P-2 (JPO)[b]
Cluster II
Preventing and combating terrorism
XB: 3 P-4, 2 P-3, 1 P-2
Cluster III
Human rights and rule of law
XB: 2 P-4, 1 GS (OL)

Abbreviations: RB, regular budget; XB, extrabudgetary.

* 2 P-3 and 1 GS (PL) positions are located in the Executive Office of DPA for financial management of the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[a] Shared resources provide programme management support to the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

[b] Associate expert.